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ABSTRACT

The 10 Technical Assistance Manuals compiled in this document were produced under cooperative agreements between the Utah State Office of Education and several school districts. Each module, an entity unto itself, is designed to assist classroom teachers with developing behavioral and educational strategies, concentrating on the objectives, techniques, effectiveness, design, methodology, and student motivational enhancement. The 10 manuals are titled: (1) "Contracting To Enhance Motivation"; (2) "Homenotes To Improve Motivation"; (3) "ISS: In-School Suspension"; (4) "Advertising for Success" (also known as public posting); (5) "Reductive Procedures: Time-Out and Other Related Techniques"; (6) "Reprimands and Precision Requests"; (7) "Self-Recording To Enhance Performance"; (8) "Teacher Praise"; (9) "Using Group Contingencies To Improve Academic Achievement"; and (10) "Using Overcorrection To Improve Academic Performance." Each manual includes a case study and references. (LL)

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Utah's BEST Project

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Utah's BEST Project:

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

Technical Assistance

MANUALS

I. Contracting to Enhance Motivation

II. Homenotes to Improve Motivation

III. ISS: In-School Suspension

IV. Advertising for Success

V. Reductive Procedures: Time-Out and Other Related Techniques

VI. Reprimands and Precision Requests

VII. Self-Recording to Enhance Performance

VIII. Teacher Praise

IX. Using Group Contingencies to Improve Academic Achievement

X. Using Overcorrection to Improve Academic Performance

Contracting to Enhance Motivation

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Contracting to Enhance Motivation

Objectives

By the end of this module you will know:

- ✔ What components and characteristics make behavioral contracts effective.
- ✔ Steps to take to implement behavioral contracting effectively.
- ✔ How to trouble shoot when problems arise in the use of behavioral contracting.
- ✔ Cautions in using behavioral contracting.

Introduction

When the word, "contract," is used, we generally think of corporate mergers or sports stars signing agreements for millions of dollars. However, contracts have an everyday meaning for most of us. When we buy cars, we sign contract agreements for repayment. Even a car's warranty is a contract for service if there is a problem with the car. When we get married, the marriage vows are a form of a contract and the marriage license is legal proof of the exchange of those vows. Even when we took our teaching position, most of us signed an employment contract which specified our salary and benefits for an exchange of services. Most of these teaching contracts also had a penalty clause for quitting the job without proper notice.

We use contracts for many adult behaviors because they are explicit and set expectations. For similar reasons, they can be used in classrooms. Contracts can be particularly helpful for enhancing academic motivation in students where expectations are important and explicit exchanges of consequences are needed.

Are Behavioral Contracts Effective?

The answer to this question is "yes" within limits. Clearly, the research literature has demonstrated that contracts can be effective in improving academic productivity in a classroom, homework completion, classroom behavior, and school attendance. In order for a contract to be effective,

the student must be capable of producing the required behavior (at least) and the delay in delivering a positive reward must not be too long. Examples of using contracts to improve academic motivation and classroom behavior are provided below.

Academics

Contracting has been used in several circumstances to improve academic motivation and performance in students. Kirschenbaum, Dielman, and Karloy (1982) contracted with high school dropouts to increase classroom participation and homework production in earning their GEDs. The simple reward used in this study was a positive letter signed by the teachers and directors of the school to the student's counselors (the counselors controlled the student's finances). In this study, appropriate classroom participation and academic gains, as measured by the IOWA achievement test, increased. However, homework improvements were only slight.

In a similar study, Kelley and Stokes (1982) contracted with 13 youths enrolled in a vocational training program for disadvantaged youths. Students were paid according to how they fulfilled their academic productivity goals. The students had been paid to attend the program; however, the teacher indicated that minimal progress was made. The administrator of the program reported that repeated threats including coercive threats to be dropped from the program had no impact on the students' academic motivation. However, making the student's payments dependent on academic production dramatically increased the number of academic items completed by the students.

Behavior

Contracting has also been used to improve several types of behavior including substance abuse, school attendance, and appropriate classroom behavior. A unique approach is the contracting-based "Student Oriented Classroom" (Basalel-Azrin, Azrin, & Armstrong, 1977). The procedures were used in a fifth grade classroom in which the teacher requested assistance for fighting and uncooperative behavior from the students. The procedures included establishing basic classroom rules for the students and teacher. The contracting component involved giving students daily feedback (1 to 3 minutes) on their individual contracts in following the classroom rules and a weekly conference (5 minutes) on their progress. Student classroom privileges were based on their contract performance. This program also included a system of polite interaction rules between students and teacher, a chance for students to make up a mistake before losing a privilege (overcorrection), parent feedback on contract progress, and a progress display of the contract goals. Progress as measured by students' perceptions was a 67 percent reduction in problems and by teacher perceptions a 90 percent reduction of classroom problems.

What Makes Behavioral Contracts Effective?

There are a number of characteristics of behavioral contracts which must be present in order for them to be effective. These are:

- *Agreeing:* This means that both parties, the teacher (or parent) and the child, have negotiated what consequence will be given for what type of behavior. Negotiation suggests

an exchange of proposals and counter-proposals between parties. The negotiation aspect of a contract is one of its major advantages, particularly in working with adolescents who want to be adult-like and independent. Negotiations should not be one-sided in the sense that one person dictates terms to the other person.

- *Formal Exchange:* This part of the definition indicates that a behavior will be produced, and then a reinforcer or reward will be given. The contracting equation is Behavior = Reward. Relaxing the behavior requirements in the middle of a contract is generally a mistake, and not giving the agreed upon reward after the behavior has been produced is always a mistake. Also, it is always a mistake to give the reward before the behavior is produced.

- *Reward or Reinforcement:* The positive consequence is frequently the motivating component of a contract. Without some type of reward or reinforcement, most children will not complete the requirements of a contract. However, other aspects of consequences can also be important with contracts. For example, penalty clauses can be important if a behavior is not produced within a certain time frame. In addition, bonus rewards can enhance motivation if a behavior is exceptionally well done or produced before a deadline.

- *Behavior:* Negotiating and defining the behavioral expectations of a contract can be one of its most important functions. The behavior should be defined so that it is objective (i.e., can be measured easily or seen). The behavioral definition should also include the standard that is expected (e.g., a B grade or better) and the time deadlines (e.g., by the end of next Friday). A behavior that is objectively defined up to a standard with time deadlines are essential components of a contract.

In addition to these characteristics, there are several approaches that can enhance the effectiveness of contracting with unmotivated students. These approaches generally involve combining contracting with other techniques.

- *Goal Setting:* Contracting can be combined with students setting their own academic goals. If this procedure is used, a bonus for reaching the goal sooner and a penalty clause for not reaching the goal on time can be added.

- *Public Posting:* This procedure has already been mentioned in combination with written contracts. The procedure should include contracting for improvements and displaying the contracts on a public bulletin board. Written contracts that are publicly posted can be enhanced by spot lighting a "Contract of the Week," having students design and do the artwork on their individual contracts, or having a displayed pillar of squares with each square that a student colors signifying one step closer to his/her contract goal.

- *Group Contingencies:* A contract can be designed for a total classroom or teams instead of an individual student. Caution should be taken in implementing a group contract to make sure that each child is capable of contributing to the contract goal. An example

of a group contingency might be for the teachers to formulate class teams which race toward a city on a United States map as a form of publicly posted group contingency. In this case it might be that the first team to go from Los Angeles to New York wins. Each completed student assignment contributes so many miles (i.e., a 100% = 100 miles; 75% = 75 miles). Speeding tickets can be given for tardies or not turning in homework. Bonuses can be given on random days for the most mileage earned.

- *Homenotes*: Contracts can be included in a homenote program. For example, when a student accumulates four weeks worth of perfect homenotes (all four weeks do not have to be in a row), he/she receives an agreed upon reward or earns a mystery motivator.

Steps For Implementing Behavioral Contracting

Step 1: Defining the contracted behavior(s) is the first step in implementing a contract. The behavior must be observable and measurable—in other words, things that a teacher can actually measure or see. Poor contract behaviors include "improving classroom responsibility" or "showing more respect for others." Better alternatives are "hand in work by the end of the period without being asked" or "follow the classroom rules regarding classmates-- talk in a calm voice, do not argue, do not fight, share toys." These are behaviors that can actually be seen and measured.

It may be necessary to break a behavior into smaller steps for a contract, particularly if a student is academically unmotivated. For example, instead of contracting for 30 arithmetic problems, a teacher may ask for 10 the first week, then 20 the second week, and finally 30 the third week. It is important to define and break up a behavior so the student is initially successful in earning the contract reward. Nothing kills the effectiveness of a contract faster for an unmotivated student than experiencing another academic failure with no reward.

Step 2: Selecting contract reinforcers is the next step in implementing a contract. It is important to remember that a teacher may list several items that a child might like. However, the child should participate in selecting reinforcers in the negotiation phase of setting up a contract. The basic rule in selecting contract reinforcers is that reinforcers should not take a lot of time to deliver, nor should they be expensive. It is better to use existing classroom items such as extra free time, getting to line up first for a week, getting to wear a hat in the classroom, a reserved parking space for older students, getting to sit next to a friend, or being the teacher's classroom aide. Treats, small toys, or classroom supplies (pencils, erasers, notebooks, etc.) may also be provided. One high school teacher persuaded community businesses to donate reinforcers such as gift certificates for five gallons of gasoline, free pizzas and movie tickets. However, many of these items are large and comparitively expensive and should be used sparingly or as bonuses for contracts.

Step 3: Defining the contract criterion is important and is often poorly done in contracts. The contract criterion is actually the definition of what is required before an exchange of behavior for reinforcement is given. Generally, contract criteria include the amount of behavior, amount of rein-

forcer, and time limits. There are two basic contract criteria. These are consecutive criteria and cumulative criteria.

The poorest type of contract criterion is a consecutive criterion in which the amount of behavior is required in a consecutive chain or row. For example, the student may be told he will receive the contract reward if he gets a B or better on his arithmetic assignments for ten straight days. In this case, the student may get nine days of straight B's and get a C on the tenth, thus not receiving the reward. Consecutive requirements are harsh and punishing for many unmotivated students.

A better type of contract criterion is a cumulative criterion in which the amount of behavior adds up with each success but does not count for failures. For example, the student may receive the contract reward when he gets ten B's or better on his arithmetic assignment. In this example, the student could have some days in which performance drops below a B; however, after he gets ten B's (with several lower grades in-between) he receives the reward (e.g. Mon-B, Tue-A; Wed-C; Thur-B; Fri-B; Mon-C; Tue-B; Wed-A; Thur-B; Fri-B; Mon-A; Tue-B = Gets Contract Reward). Cumulative criteria are better because they allow the student some days in which he/she does not meet the criterion.

Time limits are explicit in most contracts. Many contracts are defined so that they pay off at the end of the week or every other week. However, contracts can also be designed to pay off each day. Contracts that go over two weeks are generally poor contracts because students cannot wait that long. A good approach is to pay off, by at least the end of the week for students who have a cumulative criterion. For example, on Fridays (Pay Day), students with five or more completed B homework assignments can watch a movie video. Students who do not have the five, must work on their assignments during the movie, but they can save the assignments from this week to count towards next week's contract.

Step 4: For unmotivated students, it is often essential to include a bonus clause and a penalty clause. A bonus clause can be an extra incentive if a student does a particularly good job or beats a timeline. This can be important when a student takes an exceptionally long time to reach the contract cumulative criterion. For example, a student will receive the contract reward when she is on time to class ten times (cumulative). A bonus will be given if the student is on time 10 times in 10 straight days or no tardies (consecutive). Often, a bonus pay off can be based on a combination of a cumulative and consecutive criteria. The basic function of a bonus is to get a student to complete a criterion in the least amount of time.

Penalty clauses are also needed with some unmotivated students. It is best to initially design an all positive contract. However, if the contract rewards are valued and the pay off time is short, and the contract still does not work, then a penalty is probably needed. It is best to design the penalty with broad time limits. For example, the student needs 15 homework assignments of B or better to receive the contract reward for November (based on a daily homework assignments for a 20 day period). However, if the number is less than 10 for the month of November, the student loses television privileges for a week. A penalty clause is needed to give added incentive when all else fails.

Step 5: The negotiation phase of contracting can be critical in securing the active participation of an unmotivated student. Negotiation allows the student to have some ownership of the contract and its terms. In addition, negotiation increases the basic communication between teacher and student and can give the teacher insights into the student's motivation problems that were unknown in the past. For instance, a student may disclose a basic skill deficiency that he was embarrassed to previously admit.

The basic substeps of negotiation are:

a) Have a specific set of contract behaviors, rewards, and criteria to discuss with the student.

b) Indicate to the student why a contract is necessary and how you want it tohelp with the student's difficulty.

c) Indicate that several components of the contract are negotiable such as rewards, behaviors, and criterion. However, a contract is needed and its implementation is not negotiable.

d) Tell the student what you want for the contract behaviors, suggest reinforcers, and indicate criterion. Ask the student for input.

e) Be careful at this stage of negotiation. Often, students set unrealistically high standards for themselves. Tell the student you want to start slow and then expand.

f) Indicate to the student that you genuinely want the contract to work. However, if things do not improve, a penalty clause may be needed. The penalty clause can be negotiated with the student within certain limits.

g) Tell the student that the contract is open to renegotiation at any time. Give the sense that you value the student's input and will renegotiate difficult behaviors, reinforcers, and criterion.

Never threaten the negative terms of a contract. Remember, a unilateral contract is not a contract by definition because all parties have not agreed to the terms.

Step 6: Put the terms of the contract in writing. Some individuals feel that actually writing the contract is superfluous, however, a written document serves several important functions. First, by writing a contract which includes a description of the behaviors, timelines, criterion, reinforcers, penalty clauses, and bonus clauses, later misunderstanding can be avoided. Writing and signing a contract clears up misunderstandings and indicates agreement with the terms at the time that all parties signed the contract. Second, a good written contract should have a section which includes data on the student's progress. If the contract has a data section, it functions as a self-recording instrument which further enhances the contract's effectiveness. Third, written contracts should be displayed. Hanging contracts on walls, taping them on desks, putting them on bulletin boards, or having a special section of the classroom to display contracts improves the effectiveness of the contract through public posting. Students are generally interested in the terms, rewards, and progress made on their contracts.

Several written contract forms and examples are provided in the Appendix of this manual.

Trouble Shooting Contracts

No technique will work in all situations with an unmotivated student. Although contracts have numerous advantages and work well with older students, there can be problems with their use.

Problem: The student starts out working hard and then loses motivation.

Solution: The reward pay off may be too distant in the future. This is one of the most frequent problems with contracts. Try and cut the time period before the reward can be earned in half.

Problem: The student appears confused and never really gets started.

Solution: This may be a problem of not defining the required behaviors carefully enough or requiring too much of the target behavior initially. Be specific in defining the behavior. Discuss it thoroughly with the student. Make sure he/she understands the requirement. If necessary, model and role play the behaviors. If the child understands, then the requirement may be too big. Try reducing the behavior requirement for one week (i.e., half the problems, a C instead of a B, 5 pages instead of 10). After at least one week where the child has received a contract reward, gradually begin to increase the contract requirement.

Problem: After negotiations, checking the time period for delivery of the reward, checking the specificity of the behaviors, and at least one week of earning the contract, the student still seems unmotivated and disinterested. This is particularly a problem if the student is passively unmotivated.

Solution: A penalty clause may be necessary to get the student to actively participate. This may involve soliciting the cooperation of a parent so that the student is penalized at home (i.e. going to bed early or losing television privileges). If the parent cannot cooperate, a student may have to receive a penalty at school, such as losing recess or free time.

Problem: The student excitedly starts out with the contract but appears frustrated and anxious before finishing.

Solution: First, check the criterion. Frustration can result from too difficult an expectation. Also, check the type of criterion. Consecutive requirements cause frustration and should be changed to a cumulative criterion.

Problem: The student is openly defiant and will not participate in the contract.

Solution: Indicate to the student that you want to negotiate the terms of the contract and you value his input. It may help a great deal to have a person who is important to the student participate in the negotiations, particularly if a penalty clause is set. People you may want to invite are parents, a coach, another favored teacher, counselor or parole officer. Make sure that the invited person supports the idea of a contract and will be helping with the negotiation of the terms of the contract.

Problem: The parents offer extremely large rewards with too long a time period before

they are delivered. It is not uncommon for parents to promise bicycles, four wheelers, trips, remote control vehicles and money to a student for greatly improve academic progress (e.g., bring your D's up to A's and B's in one semester).

Solution: Parents can be a real asset in helping to design a contract. Talk to the parents and express your concern over the promised big reinforcer. Work out a list of smaller rewards with a much shorter delay period with them and suggest using the large reward as an additional bonus.

Cautions

Caution is needed regarding the use of contracts in that teachers and parents must realize that most contracts are behavior management systems with a delayed reward payoff system. The word delayed is stressed because most contracts provide rewards on a weekly or every other weekly schedule. When working with unmotivated students, delay frequently destroys initial steps that are needed to get a student started. Contracts can be most useful when: (1) They are used as a way of fading out more frequent rewards, or after a student has started to work appropriately, or (2) They are used with older or more motivated students. Contracts with long delays can be a mistake for younger children or highly unmotivated students. In these cases, it is better to start with an hourly, twice daily, or daily reward system.

Teachers must also be aware that parents and other professionals working with a student may have objections to the use of contracting. The teacher must be prepared to effectively counter these objections before proceeding with contracting as an intervention. There are several objections that are commonly voiced. The first objection is that contracts are not needed if students would just be responsible. It is easy to answer this objection. First, unmotivated or behaviorally acting out students are not responsible; thus, other techniques are needed to make certain they succeed. The other answer to this objection is that even responsible individuals may need contracts for important behaviors. We have already discussed the use of contracts in buying a car, marrying, and accepting a teaching position.

The second objection is that contracts act as an artificial crutch. Contracts should be designed to enhance initial motivation and should then be slowly faded out of use. However, it is better to use a tool such as a contract and make sure that a student makes academic progress rather than letting him fail.

The third objection is that contracts are complex and take too much time. A well designed contract is like a good investment. Most sound financial investments take initial start-up capital in order to return greater dividends later. Similarly, a well designed contract will initially take a little more time than simply doing nothing with the student. However, the dividends are much greater in improving the student's academic motivation, improved communication through negotiating the contract, and focusing teacher attention on student performance. In fact, contracts are one of the most efficient strategies a teacher can use with a student to improve academic motivation.

Case Study

Bubba is a 6th grade student with severe motivational and behavior problems. He has had particular problems in completing class assignments and has never turned in homework. He is defiant in class and often appears frustrated by academic tasks. Bubba's parents are interested, but his father works night shifts and his mother reports that she can do little with Bubba at home. His mother reports that, "Bubba just sits and watches television".

When the teacher interviewed Bubba in her office he reported that he would like to do better in class but has difficulty getting started. Bubba also reported that he feels stupid around other students, particularly when doing his arithmetic problems. Simple probes show that Bubba has several skill deficit areas in arithmetic, especially in multiplication facts. When asked what he likes, Bubba reports liking television, candy, money, and recess time.

The teacher decided to design a contract with Bubba in which he can be paid off each day with a simple in-class reinforcer if he has done his multiplication sheet for the day. There are several reinforcers written on slips of paper that are put in a grab bag and Bubba gets to randomly select one each day. A bonus is also given when Bubba scores 80 percent or better on three multiplication fact tests given at the end of each week (cumulative criterion). The bonus is a secret reinforcer placed in a mystery motivator envelope (an envelope that is sealed with the reinforcer written on a slip of paper). The mystery motivator is kept in the teacher's desk drawer and may include such items as a movie video the teacher rented, lunch at a fast food restaurant with Bubba's father, or a sleepover with a friend. If Bubba fails to complete his daily multiplication fact sheet, the teacher calls home and the television is locked up (using a small tool chest lock on the plug) for one day.

The contract was written and signed by Bubba and his parents. Bubba took an active role in negotiating the reinforcers and the amount of work to be done. He was not particularly happy about the penalty clause of losing television for not working, but he said he would go along with the "deal." As with all contracts, the teacher posted the contract on the bulletin board along with other children's contracts.

In the first four weeks of the contract Bubba has completed 80 percent of all assigned arithmetic sheets and has learned his times tables through the 8's. He received one bonus of a sleepover, and his parents have had to lock-up the television set only three times. (Note: When the target behavior is a

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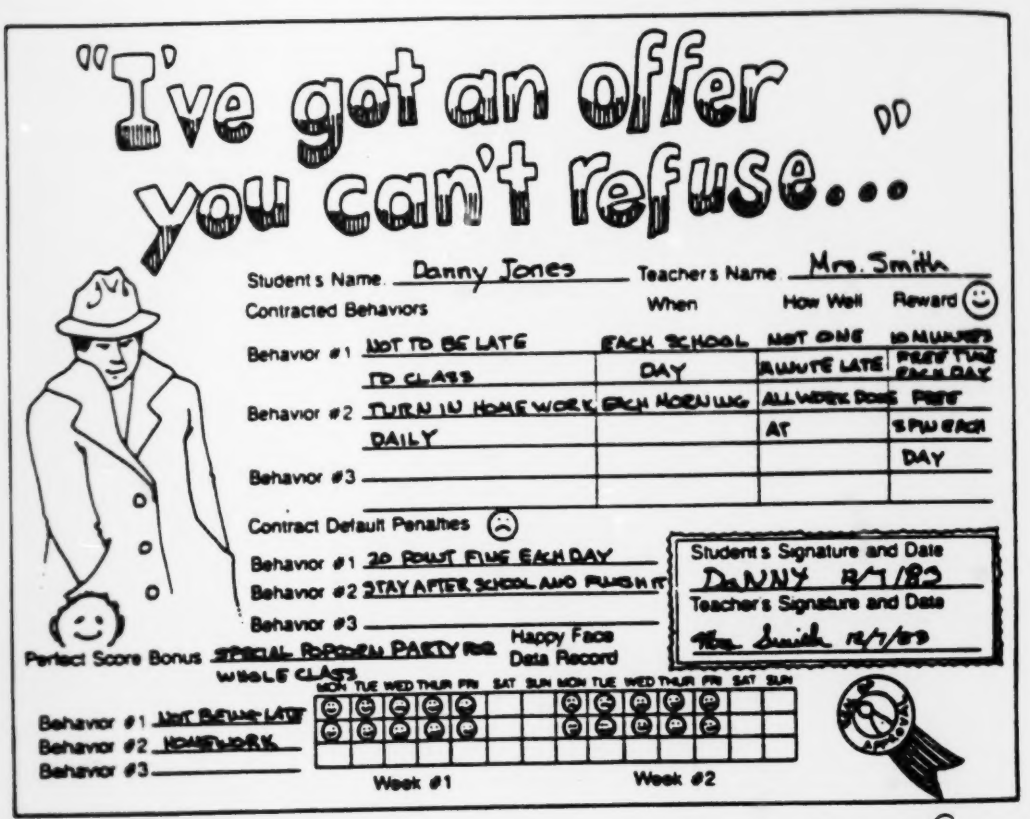
Appendix A

Examples of Behavioral Contracts (filled out)

BASIC COMPONENTS OF A BEHAVIORAL CONTRACT

1. Date agreement begins, ends, or is renegotiated (at least 1 week; no more than 3 weeks for behaviorally disordered students).
2. Behavior(s) targeted for change (measurable).
3. Amount and kind of reward or reinforcer to be used.
4. Schedule of reinforcer's delivery.
5. Signautres of all those involved: client, parents, mediator, and teacher,
6. Schedule for review of progress (best daily).
7. Bonus clause for sustained or exceptional performance.
8. Statement of the penalties that will be imposed if the specified behavior is not performed.


"I've got an offer you can't refuse..."
Student's Name Danny Jones
Teacher's Name Mrs. Smith
Contracted Behaviors
When
How Well
Reward
Behavior #1 NOT TO BE LATE TO CLASS
EACH SCHOOL DAY
NOT ONE MINUTE LATE
10 MINUTES FREE TIME EACH DAY
Behavior #2 TURN IN HOMEWORK DAILY
EACH MORNING
ALL WEEK DOES AT
FREE 5 FUN EACH DAY
Behavior #3
Contract Default Penalties
Behavior #1 20 PUSH UPS EACH DAY
Behavior #2 STAY AFTER SCHOOL AND FINISH IT
Behavior #3
Student's Signature and Date
DANNY 12/1/89
Teacher's Signature and Date
12/1/89
Perfect Score Bonus SPECIAL HOLIDAY PARTY FOR WHOLE CLASS
Happy Face Data Record
MON TUE WED THUR FRI SAT SUN MON TUE WED THUR FRI SAT SUN
Behavior #1 NOT BEING LATE
Behavior #2 HOMEWORK
Behavior #3
Week #1
Week #2

Source: Text reprinted from *Writing Behavioral Contracts: A Case Simulation Practice Manual* by W. J. DeRisi & G. Butz, 1975, Champaign, IL: Research Press, p. 43. Used with permission.

"I've got an offer you can't refuse..."

STUDENT'S NAME: Danny JONES TEACHER'S NAME: Mrs. Smith

CONTRACTED BEHAVIORS	WHEN	HOW WELL	REWARD
BEHAVIOR #1 NOT TO BE LATE TO CLASS	EACH School DAY	NOT ONE MINUTE Late.	10 Minutes EACH Free time DAY
BEHAVIOR #2 TURN IN HOMEWORK Daily	EACH MORNING	All WORK DONE NIC LABEL	Free Spinner EACH DAY
BEHAVIOR #3			

CONTRACT DEFAULT PENALTIES:

BEHAVIOR #1 20 POINT FINE EACH DAY

BEHAVIOR #2 STAY AFTER School AND Finish it

BEHAVIOR #3

PERFECT SCORE BONUS: Special Popcorn Party for Whole Class

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE & DATE
DANNY 12/7/88

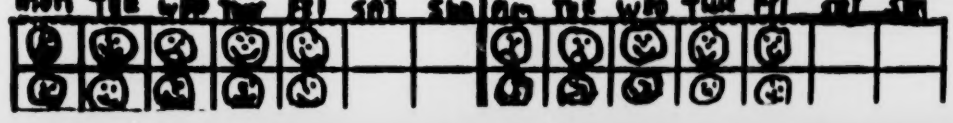
TEACHER'S SIGNATURE & DATE
Mrs. Smith 12/7/88

HAPPY FACE DATA RECORD

17

Behavior #1 NOT BEING LATE

Behavior #2 HOMEWORK



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Appendix B

Examples of Behavioral Contracts
(empty)

"I've got an offer you can't refuse..."

_____'S CONTRACT
(name)

I AGREE TO: _____

_____

_____

IF I MEET THESE CONDITIONS BY _____, I EARN THE FOLLOWING
(date)

PRIVILEGE: _____

_____

SIGNED: _____ WITNESS: _____

PARENT: _____ TODAY'S DATE: _____

☆Contract

TARGET BEHAVIOR

WHO: _____

WHAT: _____

WHEN: _____

HOW WELL: _____

_____

_____

PRIVILEGE

WHO: _____

WHAT: _____

WHEN: _____

HOW MUCH: _____

_____

_____

AGREED: _____ DATE: _____

AGREED: _____ DATE: _____

Record

Days →

Task Tally

CONTRACT

TASK	REWARD
Who: _____	Who: _____
What: _____	What: _____
When: _____	When: _____
How Well: _____	How Much: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. Sign Here: _____ Date: _____

2. Sign Here: _____ Date: _____

TASK RECORD

CONTRACT

EFFECTIVE DATES: FROM: _____ **TO:** _____

We, the undersigned individuals agree to the following contract conditions:

TARGET BEHAVIORS	**PRIVILEGES**
When: _____	**Then:** _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
When: _____	**Then:** _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
When: _____	**Then:** _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

BONUS: _____

_____

_____

PENALTY: _____

_____

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

This contract will be reviewed in two weeks.

Homenotes to Improve Motivation

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Homenotes to Improve Motivation

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ✔ The variables that make homenotes effective.
- ✔ How to implement a homenote system.
- ✔ How to enhance the effectiveness of a homenote system.
- ✔ How to solve specific problems associated with homenote systems.

Introduction

Homenote systems are one of the most effective techniques for improving a student's motivation and classroom behavior. They are also one of the most mismanaged and underutilized techniques. A homenote system is simply a note (a) that is periodically completed by a teacher, (b) that assesses academic and behavioral progress, (c) which is sent home for the parents to review, apply consequences, and sign, and (d) returned to school.

A major strength of a homenote system involves the school-to-home and back-to-school cycle because it informs parents of their child's progress and allows the use of consequences in the home that are rarely available to the teacher.

Are Homenotes Effective?

There are several published studies and reviews of research about homenote systems that document their effectiveness (Atkeson, & Forehand, 1979; Barth, 1979; Broughton, Barton, & Owen, 1981). The available evidence suggests that a well-designed homenote system can improve academic performance and classroom behavior. Academic behaviors that have been improved using a homenote system include listening to the teacher's instructions, participating in class, answering questions, working with eyes and head towards materials, completing classwork neatly, competing homework,

and achieving at an appropriate level (Atkeson, & Forehand, 1979; Broughton et al., 1981). Specific examples of academic enhancement include improving math scores (Karraker, 1972); increasing homework completion in two classes of seventh and eight grade students from averages of 65% to 85% (Lordeman, & Winnett, 1980); and in-seat completion of reading assignments from an average of approximately 46% to 84% (Imber, Imber, & Rothstein, 1979).

Classroom behavior also improves with a well-designed homenote system. Frequently, when classroom behaviors improve, there is also an increase in academic performance. Specific classroom behaviors that have been pinpointed for change with homenotes include off-task behavior, aggression, classroom rule violation, tantrums, talk-outs, disturbing others, out-of-seat, and other behaviors (Atkeson, & Forehand, 1979; Broughton et al., 1981; Barth, 1979; Imber et al., 1979; Taylor, Cornwell, Riley, 1984) All of these behaviors are good candidates for use with homenote systems. One study demonstrated a 90% decrease in disruptive classroom behavior when a homenote program was implemented (Ayllon, Garber, & Pisor, 1975).

What Makes Homenotes Effective?

One important variable is the need to hold a parent meeting or training before a homenote system is implemented. This is designed to orient the parent to the note, help them set up home consequences, and make sure the note is not used in a punitive manner. Training can range from a 2 hour training session (Ayllon, et al., 1975) to a telephone parent training session (Imber et al, 1979), or to simply a sheet of instructions that is sent home to the parents and explains the homenote procedures (Lahey, Gendrich, Gendrich, Schnelle, Gant, & McNees, 1977). Whatever method is used, it is important to have a parent contact in which the parents are given directions about receiving, reacting to, and troubleshooting a homenote program. However, face-to-face contact with a parent is the best approach.

Many parents are willing and interested in cooperating with teachers.

Other effectiveness variables found in the homenote research literature involve such factors as whether the note is totally positive or contains some type of mild punishment procedure if the student does not perform well or loses the homenote (Atekson, & Forehand, 1979; Broughton, et al., 1981). Some research indicates that praise for good performance and loss of basic home privileges for poor performance is more effective than just positive consequences (Schumaker, Hovell, & Sherman, 1977).

Other issues include whether a simple "Yes" and "No" is better than a more detailed rating, whether notes should be sent home daily or only at the end of the week, or the advantages of a simple note as compared to a complex and information-packed note. Each of these issues will be described in implementing an effective homenote program.

How to Implement A Homenote System

The basic principles for starting a homenote system are relatively easy and economical. However, several questions should be answered before a

homenote system is implemented. First, is there a need? Is a particular student having academic or behavioral difficulties in the classroom? If the answer is yes, then a homenote may be the answer. Second, are the parents cooperative and willing to start a homenote system? This is an impossible question to answer without first meeting with the parents. However, many teachers feel that behaviorally disordered and unmotivated students will have parents with similar characteristics. This is generally not the case. Many parents are willing and interested in cooperating with teachers. Remember many parents have been repeatedly called by school personnel over the years to complain about their child's lack of academic progress or behavioral difficulties. You may be the first teacher to offer cooperation and a solution. Do not be surprised if the parents are somewhat suspicious.

Once you commit to start a homenote program, then you must be organized enough to run it.

The last question to ask is, "Am I organized enough as a teacher to start a homenote program?". You can not expect a student to be organized and perform if you are a model of disorganization. If you forget to sign a homenote, or do not take the time to make appropriate comments, or if you don't make sure the student has a new homenote at the beginning of the week, then you will make a bad impression on the student and parents. In addition, if consequences are applied at home for bringing the note home or for good performance, then the student may suffer if you do not follow through. Once you commit to start a homenote program, then you must be organized enough to run it. However, good homenote systems almost run themselves. There are nine basic steps for implementing a homenote program:

Step 1: The first step is to design a simple note. Complex notes are difficult to complete and they are often not read by parents. Make the note simple, and if you decide to give a note to a student each day, make sure one note will last for the whole week. It is difficult to xerox a new note each day. A sample note that can be used with elementary and secondary students can be found at the end of this module. The note has space for five behaviors and the note can be rated Monday through Friday on a single sheet of paper.

Step 2: Have an idea about which behaviors you would like to list on the note. Again, simplicity is the basic rule. Never have more than five behaviors because it is too difficult for the student to track, and it will be difficult for you to monitor the progress on more than five behaviors. In addition, the behaviors should consist of both academic behaviors and classroom behaviors. For example, a homenote might list (1) reading performance, (2) arithmetic performance, (3) spelling performance, (4) paying attention, and (5) following teacher's directions. This is a good blend of academic and classroom behaviors. The comments section of the note can be used to give parents additional information or to provide information about homework assignments.

Step 3: The next step is to arrange a meeting with the student's parents to discuss the homenote program and to gain their cooperation. Parent

contacts can be done on the telephone, through a letter, or by having them come into school for a meeting. If possible, it is better to have the parents come in for a face-to-face meeting. It is also important to remember that many parents have been contacted by the school before. However, many of these contacts have been aversive because their only purpose has been to report about a student's problem or complain about the student's behavior without offering help. It is important to emphasize that you are asking for their input and cooperation, but that you are also going to offer some concrete help. Clearly express your hope that you can work cooperatively together. Once the parents have agreed to the meeting, then a set of goals should be set for the meeting.

Goal 1: Ask for the parent's input about what behaviors they would like to see changed.

Goal 2: Describe the behaviors that you would like to list on the homenote. Determine if the parents agree that these are important behaviors (e.g., reading, arithmetic, or spelling performance, paying attention, following teacher's instruction, or being prepared for class).

Goal 3: Determine what positive or mildly aversive consequences the parent can deliver at home depending of the student's homenote performance.

Goal 4: Ask the parent to read the note each day and make sure it is initialed by you, and sign it to indicate they have read the note.

Goal 5: Convince the parent that they should accept no excuse or reason for the student not bringing the note home. Common reasons given by students are "I lost the note", "There was a substitute teacher who would not fill out the note", "A kid stole the note from me", or "The teacher ran out of notes". In addition, identify a consequence for the student if he or she loses or forgets the note.

Goal 6: Give the parent a copy of your telephone number so they can call if they are confused about the program or they have a question to ask.

Step 4: It is important to use consequences for homenote performance. There should be positive consequences for appropriate classroom performance and behavior. There should also be mildly aversive consequences for poor performance or classroom misbehavior. Examples of consequences that can be agreed upon in the parent meeting are:

1. For a perfect day, the student stays up 30 minutes later than normal (i.e., if the student's regular bed time is 8:00 p.m., he would stay up to until 8:30 p.m.).

2. For each frowny face , the student goes to bed 10 minutes early (i.e., if the student's bedtime is 8:00 p.m. then a note with three frowny faces would mean the student goes to be at 7:30 p.m.).

3. For a perfect, day the student watches an additional 30 minutes of television.

4. For each frowny face, the student misses 30 minutes of television (i.e., if the student gets two frowny faces, then the student misses one hour from the allotted three hours of television watching).

Other consequences for elementary students might include the right to use a bicycle, time on the Nintendo Video game, computer time, or allowance money earned or lost. For adolescents, consequences might include the right to use the family automobile on the weekend, using the telephone, or listening to music on the family stereo. It is important to find meaningful consequences. Homenotes work if there is something valued that can be earned or lost. However, just earning positive rewards is generally not enough.

Step 5: Decide when the homenote will start and how frequently the note will be given. It is generally better to start off giving the homenote each day and slowly fading to giving the note only on Fridays, and finally no note. For example, a student could be told that when she gets eight good or perfect weeks (not necessarily eight weeks in a row), then she will get the note only on Fridays. When they get another eight good weeks then they are off the note entirely.

Step 6: Once the note has been designed, the behaviors defined, the parent meeting held, the consequences determined, and the frequency of the note arranged, then you must pick a date to start. The date should be selected with the parents or the parents must be informed. Mondays are the best days to start. It will also help a great deal if the teacher calls the parents at least twice during the first week and once a week for the next two weeks after the program has started. The calls can be used to troubleshoot any problems and to show the parents that you are interested. They also let the student know that there is a firm and cooperative link between you and their parents.

Step 7: On the first day, give the student the note and mark each behavior on the card. A global evaluation of each behavior is fine. If you are too detailed and take too much time, you are less likely to use the note in the future. Mark the note as accurately as you can, but do not take too much time. Mark each note with a happy face or sad face for younger students. For older students or adolescents, a variety of markings can be used: E for excellent, S for satisfactory, or a U for unsatisfactory. Other teachers simply mark the note with a plus (+) for satisfactory work or a zero (0) for poor work. Do not use a minus (-) because it can be changed into plus (+) very easily. It is important also to initial each rating because initials are difficult to forge, and it adds a personal touch that you have marked and reviewed the note.

Step 8: If possible, make the student successful for the first couple of days with good notes. Some parents are worried that a teacher might use the note to simply punish their child. Making the student successful is important. However, the first time you mark an unsatisfactory behavior on the note, it is good practice to tell the student exactly why they are being marked down and then ask the student to repeat the reason (frequently at home parents will ask the student why they got a poor mark and this is a good method to insure the student knows the answer). It is also wise, if possible, to call

the parent on the day of the poor mark to answer any questions and comment on how well the program is going.

Step 9: After the program has been in operation for approximately 4 to 6 weeks, arrange another parent conference or at least make a telephone call to review the student's progress. It is important in this meeting to be optimistic and emphasize the gains the student has made. This is also an excellent opportunity to troubleshoot any problems with the program with the parent.

Homenotes are particularly prone to problems because they rely on a student to carry the note. However, the problems are fairly easy to fix if you have a well designed program and a cooperative parent.

Troubleshooting a Homenote Program

Problems can occur even with the best programs. Homenotes are particularly prone to problems because they rely on a student to carry the note. However, the problems are fairly easy to fix if you have a well designed program and a cooperative parent.

Problem: The student continues to lose the note.

Solution: Have the student go to bed one hour early, or miss all of television or outside play time each day they forget the note. It is important to emphasize to the student that no excuses are accepted and that it is their responsibility to ask the teacher for the note at the end of the school day.

Problem: The student changes the ratings or forges your initials.

Solution: Changing a rating (i.e., making a sad face happy) or forging initials should be handled like a lost note. No excuses should be accepted and the student should go to bed an hour early or lose all television privileges. It is important to prepare parents for this problem. It is not uncommon, particularly if a student may lose some of his privileges because of poor ratings from the teacher. The parent should have your telephone number to call if they suspect the homenote has been altered.

A frequent excuse used by a student is that they marked the card because their teacher was absent and the substitute teacher did not know how to mark the card. In such instances, the student should be taught an alternative solution which is to ask someone in the principal's office for help with the note if the substitute teacher is unaware of the procedures. This person (a secretary or aide) could go with the student and ask the substitute for the rating, answering any questions that the substitute might have.

Problem: The student refuses to take the note.

Solution: This is a relatively rare problem but it does occur. If the student flatly refuses to take the note, have the parent consistently implement the procedures for a lost note (i.e., to bed early, no television, or loss of outside

play privileges). It may be important to be a support for the parent during this difficult time. A telephone call and confident reassurance can help a great deal. Most children and adolescents will come around in about a week after the parents have consistently applied the consequences. However, it may help to enhance the program by using some type of reinforcement procedure in the classroom for the student taking and using the note. Several different reinforcement procedure will be discussed in the next section.

Problem: The parents are willing to look at the note, but they are incapable of applying consequences at home for the program.

Solution #1: Try putting together a reinforcer kit and delivering it to the home. The kit can contain some simple reinforcers (e.g. candy, stickers, little toys). that the parent can give the student for a good note.

Solution #2: Obtain the parent's permission for you to apply the consequences for the note in your classroom. At least have the parent review and sign the note. When it is returned the next day, then you can manage some in class reinforcers (e.g. mystery motivator, spinner, grab bad) or mild punishers (e.g. missing recess, having to stay after school, eating lunch in the classroom and not in the lunchroom, no in-class free time).

Problem: You suspect the parents may be abusive to the student if he receives a poor note.

Solution: Ask the parents to come in and ask for their cooperation in helping to apply the agreed upon consequences (both positive and mildly aversive). Tell them that if they punish too much it will make the program fail and the student will learn to dislike school. If abuse continues, you may have to discontinue the program or call the authorities if the abuse is severe. This is a serious problem, but it occurs rarely.

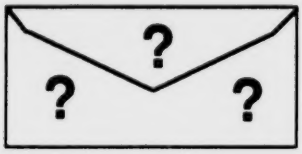
Problem: A parent refuses to participate in the program and will not even sign the note.

Solution: Ask the parents for a face-to-face meeting. In the meeting ask about their concerns, and determine if you can answer any of the difficult concerns they may have. If both parents come in, appeal to the parent who seems most willing to participate. Explain that the homenote program is not designed to punish the student, but to give the student feedback about his performance and to keep the parent informed. Ask if they would be willing to try the program for as little as two weeks. If the parents still refuse, tell them that you would like to give the student the note anyway and hope they will look at the note (remember- in this case make sure the note is primarily positive for the first week).

Enhancing Homenote Performance Techniques

Homenotes work well if they are designed as described above. However, it sometime helps to add some techniques that will make an unmotivated student work even harder or overcome some of the problems associated with homenotes. Some of these techniques are:

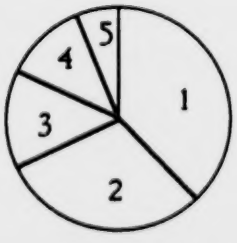
1. **Unique Reinforcers**: Reinforcers can be classroom-based or they can be home-based. Their general function is to motivate the student to do well with their note ratings and to bring the note home and back to school. An example of using a unique reinforcer is a refrigerator Mystery Motivator (M&M). The mystery motivator is simply an sealed envelope that is placed on the refrigerator.



Inside the envelope is a slip of paper that has a reward written on it. Once or twice a week, if the student brings the note home with all good markings, then student then gets the mystery motivator. It may help if the teacher calls the parent to tell them it is a mystery motivator day or writes on the homenote a prearranged code for the parent that indicates it is a mystery motivator day.

Another unique reinforcement system that works equally well is a spinner. If the student brings the note home with all good markings, he/she is allowed to spin the arrow. Whatever the arrow lands on the student gets.

Reinforcers
1 = Treats
2 = Pencils
3 = Stickers
4 = Class game
5 = Free time



Another program is a grab bag that has 5 or 6 rewards in it. The student is allowed to select one reward without looking on days of good homenote performance.

Unique reinforcement systems can be used either at home (as in these examples) or in the classroom if the student does well. However, these are added incentives and should not take the place of the basic privileges and mild punishers that have already been discussed.

2. **Random Notes**: Some teachers would like to use a homenote system with their whole class, however, the time involved in completing 20 to 30 notes is prohibitive. One approach that has shown excellent results is to pick two or three students randomly at the end of each day in the classroom and send a note home with them. This approach was used by Saudargas, Madsen, and Scott (1977). They compared the effects of sending a note home only on Fridays only (fixed) as opposed to sending it home with randomly selected students on any day of the week (variable). The fixed notes produced an 80% assigned academic work completed. The random approach increased work production 140%. Clearly, a random note approach with a whole class is an effective technique.

If two or three students are picked at random in a class each day to take a note home, it helps to tell the students that you will call one of their parents to talk about the note and make sure that it got home.

3. **Group Contingencies**: Group contingencies provide a consequence to a group depending on the behavior of one or two students. Gresham (1983)

used a group contingency in combination with a homenote to improve the classroom behavior of an 8 year old mildly retarded male, Billy. Billy had an extreme history of destructive behavior in his foster home that included setting fires, destroying property, and aggression towards his foster siblings. The foster mother requested help from the teacher and school psychologist who set up a homenote program. If Billy's home behavior was nondestructive he earned juice time, recess, tokens, and a Billy party for the whole class on Friday. The use of a group contingency reduced Billy's destructive acts of an average of 3 per day to virtually 0 per day.

4. Homenotes as a Behavioral Contract

Sometimes it is useful to use the homenote program in conjunction with a classroom behavioral contract. For example, have a student save their 100% week homenotes. These are the perfect homenotes in which the student has made all positive ratings for the whole week. Each 100% homenote is worth a ticket. When a student has saved enough tickets they get a special reward or privilege. The student might have to save four 100% homenotes and then get a special treat-being taken by the teacher to a fast food restaurant for lunch. Behavioral contracts can also be combined with a group contingency. When a student earns four 100% homenotes, then the entire class gets to watch a special video and have a popcorn party.

Do not set the requirement so the student has to earn a set number of notes in a row or consecutively. Instead, make the requirement cumulative so the student can save 100% notes and then possibly have a poor week. A cumulative requirement is much better than a stringent consecutive requirement.

Cautions

Some teachers object to the use of homenotes. The most common objections to homenotes by teachers include:

1. "Homenotes take too much time to fill out"- A well designed homenote takes approximately 30 to 60 seconds to fill out.

2. "Parents will not take the time to read the note and do the program"- The research clearly shows that a majority of parents approve of the homenote program and will work with teachers.

3. "Students will lose the notes or counterfeit the signatures"- This sometimes happens, but a well designed homenote program has built-in safeguards to stop these problems.

4. "Homenotes are only effective in the beginning and lose their effectiveness"- This is not true when the research is reviewed. A well designed homenote system can produce durable changes in motivation and behavior.

5. "Homenotes are only effective with younger students, not secondary students"- This is not true when the research is reviewed. Much of the application research has been done with secondary students.

Case Study

Jake is an ten year old student in the 5th grade who has been having both academic and behavioral difficulties over the past two years. Jake's mother approached the teacher and asked if there

was any type of extra help or counseling that might help Jake and get him back on the right path. She explained that she was a single mother and had some difficulty supervising Jake until she came home from work each day. When she got home, she could manage Jake and she had tried to get information from him about how well he did that day in school and his homework assignments. Jake indicated that he was doing very well, and that he did his homework at school. Neither of which were true. The mother appeared concerned and responsible and tried to provide a structured home life for Jake. She had him do a set of chores each day, and had a set bed time for Jake and his younger brother which was 9:00 p.m.

The teacher immediately recognized the advantages to this case. First, the mother had approached the teacher for help and appeared very cooperative. Second, although Jake was unsupervised until the mother got home, she could then manage his behavior. Third, the mother wanted daily information about Jake's progress in the class and his homework assignments. Fourth, Jake had shown an interest in whatever rewards and reinforcers the teacher had used in the classroom. Fifth, when the teacher interviewed the mother about home practices, the mother indicated that Jake did not like his bed time of 9:00 p.m. and preferred to stay up later with the mother watching and additional of television. At the end of the teacher-parent meeting, their was an exchange of telephone numbers in case there were questions or difficulties with the program.

The mother and teacher decided to implement a homenote program starting next Monday. The consequences were: (1) Jake gets to stay up an additional 30 minutes past his 9:00 p.m. bedtime for a perfect home note, (2) for each 0 on his homenote Jake goes to bed 10 minutes early, and (3) when Jake get three perfect weeks (not in a row) of homenotes he can cash them in for lunch with the teacher. If Jake loses the homenote or alters the ratings, he goes to bed one hour early (8:00 p.m.) and TV privileges the next day. In addition, the teacher implemented an in-class mystery motivator. She picked an envelope and wrote a reward (e.g. getting to sit anywhere in class, 10 minutes free time with a buddy, candy from the class store, etc) on a piece of paper. She also wrote on the outside of the envelope a day of the week (and did not show Jake) that if he brought his note back to class and signed by his mother, that day he would get the mystery motivator. Jake could get from one to two mystery motivator each week.

It was explained to Jake that it was <u>his</u> responsibility to get the note to the teacher at the end of the day and have it signed. The teacher and parent would accept no excuses. The behaviors on the note included: (1) acceptable work in reading, (2) acceptable work in arithmetic, (3) completing and turning in the daily assigned homework, (4) paying attention in class, and (5) no arguing behavior. Jake was also required to write his daily homework assignment on the Comment section of the note. Each day the teacher would initial the note, and likewise at home, when the mother read the note she would initial it.

As predicted, the first week went fairly well and the teacher made sure that Jake was successful and he got two mystery motivators. However, on the second week, Jake had difficulties and lost the note. He simply indicated to his mother that the teacher forgot to make up a new note and would give him

one tomorrow. The parent called the teacher, and Jake went to bed an hour early and he lost TV privileges the next day. Jake was irate the next day in class and tore up the note and said he would not participate. He was particularly angry because his younger brother got the stay up and watch television when he had to go to bed an hour early. The teacher called the mother at work and discussed the problem. They both decided they could wait longer than Jake. That night he again went to bed an hour early and lost the next day's television privileges. He threw a temper tantrum, stomped out of the house, but came back and was put in bed by his mother. The next day he asked for the note, and did exceptionally well in class. The program has been running for two months. Jake has won three teacher contracts, got the mystery motivator eight times, and is doing particularly well in class. He could be taken off the note, however, the mother wants to continue because it gives her the basic information she needs to know to track Jake's school progress.

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My Daily Home Note

Name: _____ Month of: _____

Subject	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.

or E = Excellent; student put forth extra effort

or S = Satisfactory

or U = Unsatisfactory, work was not completed and/or not done satisfactorily.

Comments: Mon. _____

_____

Comments Tues. _____

_____

Comments Wed. _____

_____

Comments Thurs. _____

_____

Comments Fri. _____

_____

Teachers: Please initial your ratings each day so we know who gave the rating.

IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM BEHAVIORS (Teacher)

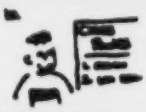
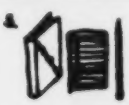
Please rate how important it is to you that a student do the following:

		Not Important	Somewhat Important	Moderately Important	Quite Important	Extremely Important
I. Classroom Behaviors:						
1.	Listens quietly to directions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Follows oral directions accurately.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Follows written directions accurately.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Appears attentive during a discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Is prepared with proper materials.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Begins assignments promptly.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Works quietly on assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Asks for help when needed, not to excess.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Turns in assignments on time.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Follows rules in class.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Completes assigned tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
II. Basic Interaction Skills						
12.	Contributes appropriately to discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Is responsive to teacher's praise and attention.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Engages in conversation appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Makes requests appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5

		Not Important	Somewhat Important	Moderately Important	Quite Important	Extremely Important
III.	**Getting Along Skills**					
16.	Participates in group activities.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Follows rules on playground.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Follows rules in hallways and bathrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Is positive and friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Is cooperative.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Gets teacher's attention appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Gets peers' attention appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Gets along with others on the playground.	1	2	3	4	5
IV.	**Coping Skills:**					
24.	Expresses anger appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Uses appropriate language (no swearing).	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Enjoys competition in classroom/on playground.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Resists peer pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Disagrees appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Accepts "No" for an answer.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Accepts criticism or consequences appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5

My Daily Home Note

Name: _____ Week of: _____

Subject	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Begins Assignments Promptly					
works Quietly					
 Follows Classroom Rules					
 Is Prepared					
Turns In Assignments on Time					

☺ or E = Excellent; student put forth extra effort

☺ or S = Satisfactory

☹ or U = Unsatisfactory; work was not completed and/or was not done satisfactorily.

Comments: Mon. _____

_____

Comments: Tues. _____

_____

Comments: Wed. _____

_____

Comments: Thurs. _____

_____

Comments: Fri. _____

_____

Teachers: please initial your ratings each day so we know who gave the rating.

Cut and Paste Icons for Homenotes

Countoons From the Children's Behavior Therapy Unit's Generalization Project
Drawings by Mrs. Melanie Neville

Icons correspond to numbered items from the Importance of Classroom Behavior Checklist (enclosed)

Cut and Paste Icons for Older Students

Icons correspond to numbered items from the Importance of Classroom Behavior Checklist (enclosed)

ISS: *In-School-Suspension*

by Ginger Rhode, Ph.D.

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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ISS: In-School-Suspension

by Ginger Rhode, Ph.D.

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ☑ The purpose of ISS.
- ☑ The necessary conditions for an effective ISS program.
- ☑ How to organize an ISS program.
- ☑ Behaviors and contingencies for ISS programs.
- ☑ Procedural safeguards for implementing ISS.
- ☑ How to evaluate the effectiveness of ISS programs.

Introduction

In-school-suspension (ISS) is a disciplinary alternative to out-of-school-suspension for less serious disciplinary infractions that do not pose a threat or danger to other people, the student him/herself, or school/personal property (Stallworth, Trechtling, & Frankel, 1983). The literature concerning in-school-suspension reflects a debate over whether the purpose of ISS should be to "punish" or "counsel" errant students (Garibaldi, 1979; Nielsen, 1979). For our purposes, the primary purpose of an ISS program is to provide for continuity of a student's educational program while reducing the likelihood/probability that the misbehavior will reoccur.

It is not the intent of this paper to describe an ISS program that will resolve all of a student's frustrations and problems or eliminate his academic difficulties. ISS is just one component of a comprehensive school discipline/management system. It should be closely coordinated with the rest of the school's programs and resources (as well as community resources when appropriate), so that the end result will be a system which addresses the multiple needs of its students.

Some of the issues involved in setting up an effective ISS program stem from confusion over what the purpose of the program is and upon what principles of behavior it is based. This confusion is exemplified by programs which isolate students from their peers to work in restricted, supervised ISS settings but whose real intent is to counsel them toward more acceptable behavior by utilizing various counseling techniques.

If the purpose of ISS is to reduce the probability that the misbehavior will reoccur, it is appropriate to refer to the research on reducing behavior for guidance. Within this literature are

several categories of interventions, all of which have numerous variations. The behavior reductive technique which most closely resembles the intent and purpose of an ISS program is "time-out," a powerful strategy when correctly implemented and when certain guidelines surrounding its use are followed. Confusion about what constitutes an effective ISS program may also stem partially from lack of understanding about the principles of behavior upon which "time-out" is based. Many of the components found within various ISS programs may not be inappropriate strategies for working with students who have problems. However, many of them, if they are part of the overall school management system, should be in addition to the ISS program described below, but outside of it. Otherwise, the different strategies are likely to contradict one another, preventing the effective use of any of them. If ISS is to be viewed as a form of "time-out," then the following information regarding the use of time-out is pertinent.

Time-Out

Time-out procedures, in the form of an in-school-suspension program, serve as a behavior reduction technique by denying a student the opportunity to receive reinforcement available in the regular school setting for a fixed period of time. "Time-out" is actually "time-out from positive reinforcement." ISS must actually provide a situation which is not in and of itself reinforcing. Thus, an ISS program which isolates students but then provides an enjoyable, fun experience is not likely to be effective. For an ISS program to be effective, the following conditions must be present:

Conditions for an Effective ISS Program

- An effective class and schoolwide discipline/management system must be in place.

- Class/school rules must be specific, and deal with observable and measurable behaviors. Students must know ahead of time exactly what the expectations are.

- Rules should be publicly posted in classrooms and schoolwide areas (e.g., lunchrooms).

- Teachers and administrators should follow a plan for positively reinforcing appropriate student behavior and performance. In other words, students should receive frequent (daily) positive recognition in some form for adhering to class and school expectations (i.e., a teacher may award her class a point every time the entire class arrives on time and allow students to have a class party when they have accumulated a prespecified number of points). Positive statements/consequences should outnumber the negative at least 2:1. Thus, the "tone" of the school should be clearly positive.

  Unless the classrooms and school provide positive reinforcement to students, no form of time-out will be effective! This cannot be stressed too strongly. Remember that "time-out" is time-out from a positive environment. Thus, while associating with their peers is reinforcing for most students, if classrooms/school are basically negative places to be, ISS will not work effectively. If ISS is more positively reinforcing than classrooms/school, ISS will fail.

- There should be a hierarchy of negative consequences on a class and schoolwide basis for students who break class/school rules. These consequences do not need to be severe consequences. In one junior high, the first instance of rule-breaking resulted in a warning (i.e., by his/her name written on the chalk-board); the second infraction resulted in the student having to remain for one minute after all the other students were dismissed from class. While this may not seem like a severe penalty, it put enough distance between a student and his peers to serve as a deterrent to misbehavior. In this same school, a third infraction resulted in 15 minutes of after-school detention, a fourth in 30 minutes of after-school detention plus a call to parents and removal from class for the rest of the period. Sluffing and tardies were made up in lunch detention and/or an after-school detention period that was held every day for the 30 minute violators and up to two hours twice each week for more serious problems. In-school-suspension in this school was used only when this hierarchy of negative consequences had been exhausted or the misbehavior was serious enough to warrant immediate removal from class.

In this junior high, students were kept in class to the extent that this was possible without creating an environment which would have prevented the teacher from teaching or other students from learning. Thus, ISS should be a last resort rather than a first resort. Following this type of approach to ISS as a component of a larger system also helps prevent overuse of the ISS setting.

- There must be consistency and absolute follow through on all phases of a class/school management system leading up to and including the ISS component. The strength of the total school program will come from the consistency and follow through in its use. Generally this part of a program will depend upon administrator support, skill, and interest. However, a program can still be effective if an administrator will delegate responsibility for these areas and allow others to do this job (i.e., teachers with "career ladder" positions have sometimes served in this capacity with the express agreement of the building administrator).

  If students can avoid consequences they have earned, the entire program will be ineffective. If consistency and follow through are not present, one would do as well, or better, to do nothing at all.

- There is strong and continual communication and support by administration, faculty, counseling staff, special education personnel and the school team (psychologist, social worker) for the class/school management system. When all these personnel work together and support one another in using the system, it is not difficult to identify student problem areas which may require resources (i.e., academic difficulties, intervention by the social worker, problem solving skills with the counselor) in addition to the negative consequences the student may have earned for misbehavior. In other words, the philosophy communicated to students is: "In this school we will help you solve the difficulties you may be having in school, and we will recognize those things you are doing well. But we expect you to follow the class/school rules at all times, regardless."

Once all these conditions have been verified, an effective ISS program can be designed.

Organizing the ISS Program

Physical setting. Decide on a physical setting for the ISS program. Schools usually utilize a variation of one of the following two types of physical settings:

1) One type is that of an actual ISS room with student desks or study carrels (the size and type of room will usually depend upon what is available or may be made available in the school).

   a. Usually a regular size classroom will be sufficient for most programs. If there is a limited choice of classrooms, the maximum number of students served at any one time may be at least partially determined by the physical space available.

   b. Student desks should be arranged to reduce student interaction (e.g., around the edges of the room facing away from each other, or even in traditional rows).

   c. The teacher or supervisor desk should be placed so as to be able to observe all students at all times. The back of the room is often a good place for the supervisor's desk.

2) An alternative type of program when there is no extra room in the school in which to house the program or when there are no funds to hire an outside supervisor has been used successfully in several schools.

   a. Special two-sided carrels are built from plywood. In two junior high schools these were built in the shop class (supervised by the shop teachers) at least partly by students assigned after school detention time. The plywood carrel is built of two pieces of plywood, each 4 feet wide and 5 feet high. The two sheets are hinged on one side with a piano hinge and have two removable braces, each with a groove within which the plywood fits. The carrel is large enough to conceal a student desk and high enough so that when the student is seated at the desk, he/she cannot be seen from outside of the carrel, and he/she cannot see anything outside of the carrel either.

b. The carrel can be folded flat for storage when not in use.

c. The carrel can be moved to different locations as needed.

d. One or two of the carrels can be placed in or near the office area if space permits while limiting visual stimuli. Very difficult students might be placed in these carrels.

e. The carrels are usually placed in classrooms near the office area (assuming office staff will be responsible for monitoring the students in the ISS carrels), typically in a corner at the back of the classroom. The piano hinge permits positioning of the carrel so that a student can gain easy entrance.

Personnel. In a separate ISS room, the supervisor will usually be:

1) a full-time (or several part-time) certified teacher(s) or other school professional(s) whose only job is to supervise the ISS program.

2) trained professionals.

3) teachers who teach in the school building who take turns (during their planning or consulting hour) supervising the program.

The first two options are possible when outside funding from grants, alternative education funding, district or other funds are available. The third option has worked well in schools where no funding is available to hire supervision, and teachers have been faced with the option of not having an ISS program to back up their school management system if they do not assist in the supervision. Some schools have even gone so far as to tell teachers that only teachers who are willing to participate in the ISS program supervision may have student problems from their classroom referred to the program!

When using a decentralized "carrel type" of ISS program, with students placed in classrooms (or at least separate locations), personnel selection is different. In this case, the following is pertinent:

1) Carrels are placed in classrooms close to the office of the program supervisor (administration, counseling staff, or other). Classrooms are selected on the basis of teachers who are willing to have an ISS carrel in their room and who have good classroom management skills in their own classes. In other words, the selected classrooms are run in an orderly fashion.

2) Classrooms for ISS carrel placement may be rotated over time.

3) Someone (administration, counseling staff, or other) must be responsible for the placement of the students, their continued monitoring (i.e., restroom breaks and lunch), tracking assignments completed, and amount of time made up.

Teachers in whose classrooms ISS carrels are placed are not responsible for students making up time in their rooms. They merely agree to provide the space in which the ISS time may be made up and to notify the office if there is any disruption or infraction of ISS rules. If this occurs, the student is removed to the office area to make up his/her time, the time to be made up is doubled, and parents are notified that a problem has occurred and what the options are for the student if it persists.

Immediacy of Placement. Using an ISS program as a behavior reductive procedure for unacceptable behavior requires that the immediacy of placing a student in the ISS program, once he/she has earned the consequence, be examined. For ISS to serve its purpose, the user must bear in mind that placing the student in the program *immediately* after it has been earned is highly likely to maximize its effectiveness (Alberto & Troutman, 1982). Awareness of the relationship between immediacy and effectiveness is important, since available ISS literature suggests that this is rarely done (Nielson, 1979; Stallworth, et. al., 1983; Winborne, 1983). Most programs appear to wait until the following day to begin an ISS assignment for a student. In addition to the question of effectiveness with delayed placement, the student is free to continue to misbehave the rest of the current school day. Under such circumstances, it is possible that a student may believe that he/she has already "blown it" so why stop now?

Thus, it is recommended that the ISS user consider setting up the program so that students are placed as soon as possible after they have earned it. As long as there is an ISS supervisor who is monitoring beginning and ending times for individual students, this should not pose a problem.

Directly related to the issue of immediate placement is a "waiting list" for ISS. Some programs are set up to handle so few students to begin with or have become so full that students have a delay in terms of days (or in one known case, weeks) before ISS time can begin. This is a totally ineffective use of an ISS program. If this type of situation arises, it is time to revise and adjust the rest of the school management program and hierarchy of negative consequences. In addition, it may be necessary to increase positives for appropriate behavior so that fewer students will reach ISS as a consequence.

If the classroom management plan has already been examined and carefully adjusted, it may be necessary to increase the capacity of the ISS program. Length of stay in ISS should also be examined. School personnel may find that they get the same results with a one day ISS assignment as with a three day one. A three day may do as much to reduce misbehavior as a ten day placement. There may be instances for which half a day in ISS is sufficient; if the half-day goes through the lunch period, even this can be a powerful consequence. The analogy of not "resorting to surgery when a pill will do the trick" is an apt one here. The ISS user is advised to assign the least amount of time that is found to reduce reoccurrences of the misbehavior—with as little waiting to begin the time as possible. Not only does this make the job of supervision easier in terms of hours per student, but this keeps students where they should be—in the classroom as productive learners.

Inform Student of ISS Rules. Prior to beginning ISS, students should be informed and understand the behavior expectations while in ISS. Typical rules for ISS are simple:

1) No talking to other students.

2) No sleeping.

3) Stay in your seat.

4) Work on your school work.

Rules should also be posted for students to see—on the wall of the ISS room or on the inside of an individual ISS carrel.

Students should be informed as to what will occur if they break ISS rules. Generally, it is appropriate to add one period (or 1 hour) to the student's total time for each rule infraction in a junior or senior high ISS program. At least one ISS program has added one full day to the student's time when a rule has been broken three or more times (Zimmerman & Archbold, 1979).

If a student continues to break ISS rules, it is appropriate to remove him from the ISS room (after only one disruption if he is in a classroom in an ISS carrel), to have time doubled and parents notified. If misbehavior continues, an out-of-school-suspension and a parent conference may be appropriate.

Assignments During ISS. In the interest of continuity of the student's educational program, he/she should be required to work on and complete classroom assignments as a condition of release from ISS when assigned time has been made up. If students are expected to do nothing for prolonged periods of assigned ISS time, further misbehavior may be encouraged. Unless students find working on their school assignments so rewarding during ISS time that this time becomes viewed as positive by the student, problems arising from using ISS time in this fashion should be minimized.

For one thing, there is evidence that students who are ISS candidates are likely to have academic difficulties to begin with, and denying them the opportunity to work on assignments during assigned ISS time may increase the likelihood that the work will not be completed at all. If work is completed while in ISS, students will return to their classes with an increased probability of being successful in them and prepared to participate in what is currently being taught. Parents are also likely to be supportive of an ISS program where their (sometimes poor) students are monitored on work completion.

Student Assignments. Several studies cite getting students' classroom assignments for them to work on during ISS as a major problem area (Chobot & Garibaldi, 1982; Nielsen,

1979). This has been reported even when students have not begun ISS time until the following day. The problem has been reported largely as a teacher problem in that teachers are sometimes unwilling to take the time to provide the assignments. One program which did not have students begin assigned ISS time until the day after they had earned it left the responsibility for gathering the assignments up to students, rewarding them by releasing them from ISS five minutes early (the following day) if they brought their assignments with them. In-school-suspension personnel reported that this worked well (Stallworth, Frechtling, & Frankel, 1983).

Another junior high which placed students in ISS as soon as they earned it provided an office staff member (usually the person who had assigned to ISS) to walk the student to his/her locker at that time to gather up all books, study materials, and assignments to which he/she had access. In this school, the office kept a complete set of texts on hand to lend students for ISS use when they reported they had left books at home, lent them to friends, or lost them.

In the same school, as one of the preliminary steps to having the student begin making up assigned time, the person who assigned the time went through the student's class schedule, one class at a time with him/her (after the walk to the locker), to determine for which class he/she already had the assignments and materials and for which ones he/she did not. For each class needed, the student was asked to fill out a slip. As soon as these slips were filled out, they were delivered to the appropriate teachers by the student office aide. Teachers were asked to return the assignments to the office as soon as possible. In this school, most teachers wrote down the assignments during their next break between classes. Even if some teachers took longer to return assignments, getting one or two to begin with gave the student enough to work on until the others were sent back to the office.

In this school, responding to assignment requests was not a problem for teachers. It is possible that cooperation occurred because the administration expected it and told the teachers so. It was pointed out that these were their students, and that this was an opportunity to have assignment completion monitored (especially if the student was frequently a noncompleter). It is to the teachers' benefit to assist in supporting an ISS program which is a part of student management for their classrooms/ school and which assists in completion of assignments they have given and view as meaningful.

If teacher cooperation is a problem, the administration may need to adopt a policy that in cases where assignments are requested and not responded to, the assignment will automatically be excused and not counted toward the student's grade. While this would be an extreme means of dealing with this problem, the presence of the policy should preclude its needing to be used very often.

Questions to Ask Before Using ISS

1) Have less punitive and less restrictive procedures/consequences been used for the student already?

2) Have the rules of appropriate behavior and the results for misbehavior been clearly explained and understood?

3) Are there procedures in place before placing a student in ISS to fully explain rules of behavior (and consequences for infractions) during ISS time so that the student fully understands them?

4) Have district regulations concerning the use of an ISS program been reviewed and complied with? Has district support for the program been obtained?

5) Are there plans in place in classes/school to ensure that appropriate student behavior is recognized and reinforced (at a minimum of 2:1 ratio) and that school is basically a positive place for students to be?

6) Has the ISS program been thought through so as to provide follow-up? In other words, do students who are assigned to the program show up? What will occur (every time) if students do not show up? Are students aware of what will happen if they don't show up?

Common Behaviors for Which ISS May be Used and Suggested Consequences

1) Fighting
2) Teacher defiance, arguing, or namecalling
3) Destruction of school/personal property
4) Not showing up for a two hour after-school detention
5) Repeated truancy/tardiness

For numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, immediate removal from the classroom and placement in ISS is warranted. For the first offense for 1, 2, and 3, the assignment of one full day in ISS is suggested. A second offense would result in a two day ISS assignment; a third in a three day assignment plus a parent conference to resolve the problem. At the parent conference, further action by the school would be defined should the problem reoccur. Any other school personnel who might be relevant to resolving the problem would also be invited to the meeting. Action by the school might take the form of a student contract, a referral to special education, assignment to a social skills or problem solving group offered through the counseling staff, or out-of-school-suspension.

For number 4 (not showing up for a two hour after-school detention), a half day ISS assignment through the lunch period would be appropriate. This assignment would be based on the rule that any assigned time that is missed will automatically double.

For number 5 (truancy/tardiness), it is suggested that after school detention time equalling the amount of time for unexcused late arrivals to class (15 minutes and longer), class cutting, and truancy from school be assigned before resorting to ISS. In other words, if a student cuts two class periods, he/she is assigned to two hours of after school detention (called "eighth period" in some schools). If he/she missed half a day of school, two two-hour after school detentions are assigned, and so on. Assigning after school detention as a first course of action helps keep students in class if they have already been truant. Most can ill afford further loss of class time. Only when students are truant again before assigned time has been made up or they have not showed up for an after-school detention (assigned time doubled as a result and the student still did not show up), then the total time owed would convert to ISS time.

Preventing students from missing assigned after-school detention is one means of avoiding assigning and supervising unnecessary ISS time. Good parent communication is one means of doing this. For students who have previously missed after-school detention time, parents can be told to expect a note that has been signed by the after-school detention supervisor, indicating time has been made up. Parents are asked for support and assistance when notes are not brought home. Repeat nonattenders can also be escorted from their last class period of the day to after-school detention by administration or other staff to avoid conversion of this time to ISS time and to avoid permitting the student to escape consequences he/she has earned.

It is suggested that for tardies (up to 15 minutes each), the following guidelines be considered:

Tardies per Class	Consequences
1-2	none
3	1 lunch detention + call parent (tell that student has 3 and what will happen with a 4th)
4	30 min. after-school detention + "U" in citizenship for class + call parent
5-6	1 hour after-school + call parent
7-8	2 hour after-school + call parent
9	ISS + parent conference

For tardies of 15 minutes and longer, the rule of assigning make-up time after school equal to the amount of missed time is suggested.

Safeguard Against Possible Legal Implications

1. Use of ISS, as with all components of the school management system, should follow due process procedures.

   a. Students must know ahead of time what the rules are and what will happen if they break them.

b. When students are accused of breaking the rules, they must be given the opportunity to respond to the accusation.

c. Parents must be notified that the action is being taken.

d. Follow district guidelines/policies for due process.

2. Parent/community members should be informed of the total school management system ahead of time. This can be accomplished by a presentation on Back-to-School Night, a presentation sponsored by the PTA, written information to parents included with registration materials or the school calendar or in a school handbook. They should be encouraged to ask questions and voice concerns *before* problems arise.

3. Support of school board members and district supervisors should be obtained ahead of time for all components of the school management system, including ISS. They should be invited to the school to see what is proposed and have an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns. Differences which they believe are too great for them to support must be resolved before the program is initiated. The program *must have full support* from these individuals to avoid future problems (e.g., a parent disagrees with the school's program and refused to allow his child to have consequences he has earned).

4. Length of assigned time in ISS should not be excessive and should bear a relationship to the severity of the student's infraction. Assigned time should be that of a "least restrictive" model with less restrictive procedures such as after-school detention and lunch detention being used first.

5. Assigning negative consequences should not be confused with denying a student his/her basic rights. For example, it is not appropriate and probably illegal to deny a student access to the restroom, the telephone, or his lunch.

Evaluating Whether the ISS Program is Working

The ISS program is meeting its objective if the misbehavior which resulted in students being assigned to ISS decreases overall in the school and/or is not repeated by the students who have spent time in ISS (and if students make up assignments they have missed while in ISS). Evaluation of program effectiveness has been weak or absent in most available ISS research.

Ideally, comparable information from previous years should be examined:

1) How many students were suspended out of school in previous years?

2) How many total days of out-of-school-suspension were assigned in previous years?

3) What was the frequency for each type of behavior problem reported in previous years (i.e. fights, truancy/tardiness, teacher defiance, property destruction)?

4) How many students spent time in in-school-suspension in previous years?

5) How many total days of in-school-suspension were assigned in previous years?

If no information is available for the previous years, comparisons are difficult.

To make comparisons of program effectiveness, the same information as that listed above would be collected during the current school year. In addition to making comparisons for previous and current years in each of the areas, out of school plus in-school-suspension totals for each year should be compared.

The program can be considered to be losing ground when out-of-school-suspensions, in-school-suspensions or a total of the two for a given year (in terms of number of suspensions or total number of assigned days) increase. Positive progress would be noted when the totals in any of the above categories decrease,

combined totals decrease, or the number of assigned suspensions, either in or out of school, remain the same, but the total number of days assigned decrease. All of these comparisons would be made assuming a school population which remains about the same size. If significant increases or decreases occur in the number of students enrolled for different years, adjustments need to be made in the comparisons to allow for this.

In addition, the following questions should be asked and responses tallied to determine consumer satisfaction with the program:

1) Are teachers and parents satisfied with the results of the ISS program? Do they view it as an effective deterrent to misbehavior?

2) How do teachers rate overall discipline/management in the classrooms and school?

3) Do teachers see any weak areas needing improvement in the overall class/school management system?

4) Do students, parents, and teachers view the assignment and implementation of the ISS program as fair?

Answers to these questions and a review of information collected from past and current years will give direction for the next year's program. This same information can be compiled and examined for each term, so that needed adjustments can be made during the school year as well.

Applications to Other Programs

The ISS program which has been described is a basic program for use in a regular junior or senior high school. An ISS component can also be effective with other populations/ programs. Some of these are described below:

Resource (special education) Program. The use of ISS can be a very effective component of a resource student's program for reducing misbehavior. Usually the program would be used for this student in exactly the same way that it is used for the rest of the school.

Some resource teachers like to have their own ISS carrel(s) in their classroom for students who are in the program. Because some resource students may have gained a lot of attention from teachers and peers for disruptive, acting out behavior in the past, denying them this attention through the use of ISS in the resource or other room offers one alternative for reducing these behaviors.

Integrating the use of the regular school ISS program (or a similar use of one within the resource program) can also be useful in mainstreaming students back to regular classes. Consistency and coordination between the resource and regular school programs will make both more effective for the resource student by providing common expectations and consequences for both settings.

Self-Contained (special education) Program. A student in a self-contained special education program would not be expected to make use of the regular school ISS program, although the availability of such a program is useful when he/she is mainstreamed back to a regular program. A student whose needs have been severe enough to warrant placement in a self-contained program, in most cases, would require closer monitoring than the regular program can provide, along with a lower pupil-teacher ratio to carry out a program as intensive as may be needed by these students.

In most cases, the self-contained form of ISS would be the use of a type of time-out:

1) nonseclusionary time-out—student is not removed from the instructional setting; rather, the teacher denies the student access to positive reinforcement through a manipulation of the environment which signals a period of time during which access is denied (i.e., student places head down on desk or teacher turns out lights for a period of time). This type is appropriate for a generalized minor disturbance.

2) exclusionary time-out—student is removed from the instructional setting to another part of the classroom as a means of denying access to positive reinforcement (i.e., removed to a chair facing a corner or placed in a screened-off area of the room).

3) seclusionary time-out—use is made of a "time-out room" to which the student is removed from the classroom. This room is available for total social isolation and results in the denial of access to any and all potential reinforcement which might result from the teacher, classmates, or classroom environment.

For self-contained populations, time-out can be a very powerful behavior reductive technique. Before utilizing time out in any form as part of a program for a self-contained population, the reader is advised to become familiar with time-out procedures to assure proper use of the procedure and to avoid serious legal implications.

Elementary School Use of ISS. In-school-suspension can be a very useful tool in an elementary school with the most serious behaviors this population presents. It is expected that an ISS program in an elementary school can all but replace out-of-school-suspensions. Guidelines and cautions for using ISS at the elementary level are similar to those with older students. The main difference is in the area of length of time assigned for offenses (See Pointer Box 1).

Generally, elementary ISS programs are decentralized with students who have earned ISS time spending it in classrooms other than their own. In an elementary school utilizing this type of ISS system, the principal needs to secure cooperation from teachers to provide a desk and chair in an isolated part of their classrooms so the principal may then assign students to complete ISS time at the ISS space in any classroom in the school. It is understood that the principal is the only person who will assign students ISS time and that when a student is assigned to make up time in a teacher's classroom, the teacher provides the space only and reports any ISS rule infractions to the office immediately, either by intercom or a note sent with a student. The principal or designee is responsible for distributing and collecting ISS assignments, restroom breaks, and lunch. The key to a successful elementary ISS program is in removing students from an "audience" for their misbehavior. This is accomplished by cross-grading ISS placements. Thus, a sixth grade student might be assigned ISS time in a kindergarten or first grade classroom and vice-versa. Students who are assigned to ISS more than three times are candidates for additional intervention. At this point, the principal calls a conference with the classroom teacher, counselor, and parent to discuss the problems. Other school personnel (psychologist, social worker) are invited to the conference as judged necessary to solve the problems.

A student contract that goes home to parents on a daily basis (with built in rewards and penalties at home), referral to social skills training groups, or referral to special education might all be considered. A trial period for the additional intervention is defined with review by the same group. Interventions are revised, strengthened, or discontinued as recommended by this group for managing student behavior.

Pointer Box 1

Behaviors for Which ISS May Be Assigned	Length of Assigned Time
Fighting, Severe Disruption (i.e., throw desk or chair)	*First offense:* Grades 1-3 --30 minutes in ISS + miss next recess + notify parent Grades 4-6 --1 hour in ISS + miss all recesses that day + notify parent *Second offense:* Grades 1-3 --1 hour in ISS + miss all recesses that day + notify parent Grades 4-6 --3 hours in ISS + miss remaining recesses + notify parent *Third offense:* Grades 1-3 --3 hours in ISS + miss remaining recesses + notify parent Grades 4-6 --all day ISS + notify parent *Fourth offense:* Grades 1-6 --ISS until parent conference held
Back-Talk to Teacher (argue, call a name); Teacher Defiance	Same consequences for offenses 1-4, with the addition of: *First and second offense:* Grades 1-3 --verbal apology to teacher Grades 4-6 --written apology to teacher *Third offense:* Grades 1-6 --written apology to teacher, verbal apology to entire class
Destruction of Property	Same consequences as for fighting with the addition of restitution of property or clean-up within the school, as appropriate.
Student has had 4 rule infractions in class in one day	Grades 1-6 --30 minutes ISS + notify parent
Student has had 5 rule infractions in class in one day	Grades 1-6 --1 hour ISS + notify parent
Student has had 6 rule infractions in class in one day	Grades 1-6 --ISS rest of day + parent conference

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Advertising for Success: Improving Motivation

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Advertising for Success: Improving Motivation

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ✔ What advertising for success is.
- ✔ What makes advertising for success effective.
- ✔ How to implement an advertising for success system.
- ✔ Cautions when using an advertising for success system.

Introduction

Advertising for success (also known as public posting) is an intervention that may be used to enhance academic motivation and decrease disruptive behaviors. Advertising for success primarily involves the display of academic progress scores or behavior measures on a bulletin board or blackboard. The academic measures can include such items as scores on papers, test scores, points earned for academic work, the number of assignments completed, percentage of assignments completed, contributions made in class, and other measures. Behavior measures can include such items as on-task behavior, being on time to class, being prepared to work, the number of warnings received for inappropriate behaviors, appropriate transitions from class to class, and so on.

Is Advertising for Success Effective?

Advertising for success is well represented in the Effective Schools Literature. This literature has been compiled and reviewed by a number of researchers interested in the differences between effective and ineffective schools (Jenson, Sloane, & Young, 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983;). A list of the characteristics of effective schools is provided below:[1]

1. There is school-wide recognition of academic success.
2. Basic academic subjects are emphasized.
3. Clear goals and high expectations are maintained for *all* students.
4. There is a school-wide sense of order and discipline.
5. Teachers reward, praise, and recognize student performance.

6. The school principal provides strong leadership, which filters down through the teaching staff to the students.
7. The principal supports and encourages the staff.
8. The school has a monitoring system that reports student progress.
9. Teachers, principals, and parents are kept aware of pupils' progress relative to school objectives.
10. The amount of time students spend on engaged academic tasks is high (minimum 70%).
11. Teachers set the stage for learning at the beginning of the school year.
12. Teachers prepare students for independent inquiry and study.
13. There is widespread support from the school staff, parents, and students regarding school norms for behavior.
14. Teachers use a variety of discipline strategies for managing disruptive behavior.
15. Teachers create an environment that *models* high learning expectations.
16. Teachers are able to motivate children.
17. Teachers use a classroom system of rules.
18. Teachers optimize learning time.
19. Teachers move around the room, are aware of what is going on, and use a system of spot checking.
20. Teachers handle disruptive behavior in a low-key manner.

It is important to note that items #1-<u>There is school-wide recognition of academic success</u> and #8-<u>The school has a monitoring system that reports student progress</u> directly relate to these systems. Posting the academic success of students provides schoolwide recognition and facilitates monitoring and reporting of student progress.

Academic increases also result from advertising for success. For example, advertising for success has been used to improve performance in the following studies:

1. Fourth graders, science test scores—errors were reduced from approximately 27 percent to 7 percent (Thorpe & Darch, reported in Van Houten, 1980).

2. Second graders, number of words written—mean words written increased from approximately 5 per minute to 10 per minute (Van Houten, Hill, & Parsons, 1975).

3. Special education students (EMR 8 to 12 years old), mean math lesson completed each day—increased from approximately .69 to 1.3 lessons per day through team advertising for success (Van Houten & Van Houten, 1977).

4. Fifth graders' mean number of questions answered correctly about the stories in their readers—increased from approximately 4 to 8 with team advertising for success (Van Houten, 1980).

5. High school, biology test performance—increased from an average of 55 percent to 73 percent with advertising for success, verbal praise, and immediate feedback (Van Houten & Lai Fatt, 1981).

Other suggested areas for academic advertising for success include spelling scores, basic number facts, hand writing samples, story writing, math calculations such as long division, physical education

activities, classroom verbal contributions, completed homework assignments and others (Van Houten, 1980).

Advertising for success has also been used to reduce disruptive classroom behavior and improve on-task classroom performance. Lyman (1984) has specifically used advertising for success and goal setting to improve the on-task behavior of elementary age (11 to 13 years), behaviorally disordered boys. All of the subjects were identified as conduct disordered and displayed such behaviors as noncompliance, aggression, truancy, and property destruction. The study took place in a self-contained classroom at a treatment center. The treatment initially involved having the boys set their own goals for on-task behavior and write it privately on a index card which the teacher kept at her desk. The effects were not impressive. However, when the boy's goals were transferred to an advertising for success chart there was a large increase in on-task behavior (from 50 percent to 75 percent). Clearly, public posting of the goals was a critical variable for improving on-task behavior.

In a similar study, Jones and Van Houten (1985) used public posting of daily quiz results in Science and English to manage disruptive behavior in three junior high school classrooms. The quizzes were simple five question tests (true or false, fill in the blank, or multiple choice) on the subject content and were administered during the last five minutes of each class. It is interesting to note that at no time was there a posting of disruptive behavior. At first, data on disruptive behavior was collected only when quizzes were started. This produced a reduction in disruptive behavior in classes 1 and 3, but not 2. With the introduction of advertising for success, students were told that the purpose of the chart was to see if each student could exceed his previous best daily and weekly score. The scores were recorded on a large wall chart in black grease crayon. With the introduction of public posting of quiz results, there was a large reduction in disruptive behavior (from approximately 40 percent disruptive behavior to 10 percent disruptive behavior) without implementing additional disciplinary procedures for disruptive behavior.

What Makes Advertising for Success Effective?

Whether it is used for improving academics or behavior, there are a number of essential components that must be present in order for advertising for success to be effective.

First, the basic component of all public posting systems involves some type of visual feedback system. This must be something students can see from their desks. A large bulletin board, marks on the blackboard, or a plastic (acetate or laminated) covered poster board are all good places to post visual feedback systems.

Second, the advertising for success system needs accurate and meaningful information that can be displayed. This requires some systematic method of gathering information. The more delayed the information or the less accurate the information, then the less effective the public posting system. There are several efficient techniques that will be discussed later in this module on how to collect meaningful information for display. However, collecting relevant information is the key to advertising for success.

Since most advertising for success systems have no tangible reward or reinforcement associated with the student's performance, the reaction of others (particularly peers) is very important. Engineering reactions is a skill that needs to be mastered by teachers using an advertising for success system.

Conscientious teachers can readily collect this information and use it in an advertising for success system.

The third component of an advertising for success system is the engineered reaction to the information. This aspect can be critical to the success or failure of the system. What is meant by an engineered reaction are the responses of teachers, aide, the principal, and peers to the information included in a advertising for success system. Since most advertising for success systems have no tangible reward or reinforcement associated with the student's performance, the reaction of others (particularly peers) is very important. Engineering reactions is a skill that needs to be mastered by teachers using an advertising for success system. Details on this skill will be given later in this module.

Steps for Implementing Advertising for Success

The steps for implementing an advertising for success system have been described in a book entitled, Learning Through Feedback: A Systematic Approach for Improving Academic Performance (Van Houten, 1980). The following steps for implementing an advertising for success system were abstracted from this book and other supporting material.

Step 1: Select a visual feedback system that is prominently displayed in a classroom. The system should be large enough to be seen by students sitting at their desks. For example, the lettering of names and performance information or data should be at least 3 centimeters high. The chart should also display a week's worth of data (Monday through Friday) with the highest weekly score (see the example below). The charts should be erasable so they can be re-used each week. A poster board covered with a plastic film or lamination is best. It is also very important to keep the visual feedback system simple. The more complex the system, the less it will be used by students. Too much information, small graphs, or complex measures will reduce the effectiveness of advertising for success.

Step 2: Decide on a positive measure. It is important to post improvements in academics and behavior. The research has shown that posting positive improvements is much more effective than posting measures that indicate poor performance or inappropriate behavior. A positive measure is also one in which a student is compared against his or her own performance and not the performance of other students. If students are routinely compared against

The research has shown that posting positive improvements is much more effective than posting measures that indicate poor performance or inappropriate behavior.

each other, then the poorer performing students will find the procedure punishing.

Step 3: Decide on meaningful and precise daily measure. For example, measures such as number of problems completed, percentage of improvement, points earned for appropriate behavior, or words read are all good measures. Global measures or information that is dependent on guess work is poor information to publicly post.

Step 4: Give feedback immediately. The longer a teacher waits to give feedback to a student, the less effective the advertising for success system will be. Feedback should be given as soon as possible.

Step 5: Develop a system to effectively score student's work so that it can be posted immediately. The usual reason that feedback is delayed to students is that teachers do not have time to immediately grade or evaluate academic work. A way to overcome this problem is to use student graders or self-grading. Research has shown that self-grading can also be effectively used in a classroom and that students learn even more from self-grading (Van Houten, 1980) than from having someone else grade their work.

Method 1: Give the students specially colored pencils or pens that can only be used for grading when the answers are given orally to the group by the teacher. Any student using a regular pencil during grading can be readily identified as cheating. The teacher may also randomly sample some of the papers and grade them for accuracy after the students have graded them.

Method 2: Set up grading stations in the classroom with the answer sheets and a special red pencil for grading. The student is allowed only to bring his/her answer sheet to the grading station. No pencils or other papers are allowed.

Method 3: Have students exchange papers and put their initials at the bottom of the paper as a grader. It will also help to have students rotate the papers, once, twice, or three times so the student does not know who is grading his/her paper. Again, a teacher can randomly grade three or four papers as a reliability check.

Step 6: Give positive differential feedback rather than feedback for an absolute level or near perfect goal. With positive differential feedback, students post improvements against their own best scores and not a predetermined criteria. For example, if a student's best score for completing math problems any day during the present week is 20 and his/her best score ever for any week is 35, then these scores would be posted as follows:

Student	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Best Day	Best Week
John Doe	15	13	20	18	—	20	35

In this way, students compete against themselves.

Step 7: The teacher should praise improvements on the advertising for success chart. This is what makes the information meaningful and reinforcing to students. The teachers should use descriptive praise statements such as, "John-what a performance! You beat your best weekly score again!", or,

"Susan is getting better and better, she did six more problems today!" Poor praise statements are global statements such as "Good job, keep it up" or "Nice improvement."

It is also important to praise students who are having difficulty, but are improving. Small steps are particularly important to these students, and their performance should always be compared to themselves (e.g., "Wow, Timmy is really doing a great job. If you look at his chart, he has improved each day. I have to keep changing his Best Day score.").

Group praise is also effective if it is used descriptively and does not single out students who are having difficulty. Good group praise statements are, "This is impressive; six students in this class beat their previous best scores," or, "What a hot class, you beat your total class best score again—what a bunch of pros."

It is a good idea for teachers to set goals for the number of praise statements that he or she will make during each day about the publicly posted information. For example, a teacher may set the minimum number of praise statements at 10 for himself and 5 for the classroom aide. This may seem artificial at first; however, it will eventually pay off. It helps to post the number on the blackboard, with only the teacher and aide knowing what the numbers mean. Research has shown that when teachers publicly post the number of praise statements they make, the number goes up (Gross & Ekstrand, 1983).

If students compete against themselves and not each other, research indicates that spontaneous student comments will be positive.

Step 8: Encourage peer comments and interaction about the publicly posted information. If students compete against themselves and not each other, research indicates that spontaneous student comments will be positive (Van Houten, 1980). However, if students compete against each other, the chances of negative or counter-productive comments increase. A teacher can also foster positive student comments in the following ways:

Method 1. Acknowledging student's comments is a good way to increase positive peer statements. For instance, a student (John) might say, "Timmy beat his best score." The teacher's remarks might be, "John you are sharp for noticing; Timmy is doing a great job."

Method 2. Amplifying a student's positive comment by adding information. For example, a student might say, "Charlie really did a good job today." The teacher might comment, "He did an additional 12 problems and beat his own best score."

Method 3. Praising a student for making positive comments about other students. A teacher might say to a student who has just made a positive comment, "Susan, you are terrific at noticing how well others are doing on the chart. Your comments make everyone feel good."

Method 4. Using confederates to stimulate peer comments about publicly posted information.

For example, a teacher may directly ask two or three popular students in the class to make positive comments about how other students are doing. The teacher should stress that the comments should be sincere and realistic. Having socially valued, popular peers make comments is contagious, and other students will start to make positive comments.

While the eight basic steps for designing and operating an advertising for success system have been detailed above, there are several advanced techniques that can improve the effects of a well designed and implemented advertising for success system even further.

Advanced Technique 1: Add a tangible reinforcer for students who have improved their scores. This seems simple, but remember the advertising for success system that has been presented so far in this module has only used teacher and peer praise as reinforcement for improvement. Mystery motivators, spinners, grab bags, or treasure boxes can be used randomly to reinforce students. For instance, a student can be selected at random from students who have posted improvements for a particular day. The randomly selected student then receives the daily mystery motivator (a sealed envelope posted at the front of the class with a reinforcer written on a slip of paper in it).

Caution: It is important to select an improving student at random. Do not make the reinforcer dependent on the biggest gain. If the reinforcer is given only to students making the biggest gain, then students having more difficulty but who are improving will be punished.

Singling students out for advertising for success because they are doing poorly can be a punishing experience.

Advanced Technique 2: Some teachers have difficulty grading papers and posting all the students' work each day. To solve this problem, the teacher can post a chart with several spaces for students' names and randomly select students at the end of the day to have their work graded and the information posted. With this technique, students are never sure who will have their work posted so all students work hard to have their work posted.

Van Houten's report of Thorpe and Dardi's study (1980) describes a random selection technique in which one fourth grade student's daily science test was randomly selected and scored by the teacher. The test was posted on the board in front of the class if it had no more than one error. If there were more than one error, the student remained anonymous and no test was posted. Errors dropped dramatically with this technique from an average of 28 percent to less than 10 percent.

It is important to randomly select students for posting. Singling students out for advertising for success because they are doing poorly can be a punishing experience.

Advanced Technique 3: Classrooms can be divided into teams and average team results can be posted. For example, three students sitting at a table for math can be designated as a team. At the end of each math period, the student can exchange papers with each other or even another team for grading. The amount of each assignment correctly completed

(number of problems) can be averaged and the team's performance can be posted along with their Best Daily Score and Best Weekly Score. A team approach does not require that individual names be posted, but only a team name. However, both team and individual performance can be posted together.

Van Houten and Van Houten (1977) used individual versus individual plus team advertising for success with elementary age special education students. They found that team posting was superior to individual posting, but that both approaches improved performance. In using individual posting the increase was from .69 math assignments to .84 reading assignments completed, an increase of 22 percent. However, when team and individual results were posted, the increase was from .69 reading assignments to 1.30 reading assignments, an increase of 61 percent. Interestingly, the percentage of spontaneous positive remarks made by the students about the reading work jumped from a baseline of 0 to 31.7 comments per day.

Advanced Technique 4: An even more powerful application of advertising for success is to combine it with a team based group contingency. With a group contingency, the classroom is divided into teams as described above; however, a reward or contingency is added for team performance. This technique was used effectively with 254 primary and middle students who displayed high rates of misbehavior (swearing, gum chewing, entering school without permission, talking back, running in hallways, loitering, kicking, fighting) (Hollan & McLaughlin, 1982). Each class was given 10 points each day (each class formed a team). If a student misbehaved, he or she lost one point from his class's total. The publicly posted information was the points remaining and the misbehavior that had caused a point loss. If a class had 45 points at the end of the week, they were declared Class of the Week (more than one class could win) and given a large class ribbon, certificates, their class picture was posted above their class point total in the hallways, and the winners were announced on the public address system. The class that won Class of the Week most over the entire study's length of time was also given a free lunch. The results showed that before the intervention the primary grade students had 31 inappropriate behaviors; this dropped to 4 after the intervention was started. Similarly, the intermediate age students had an average of 33 misbehaviors before the intervention and only 5 after the intervention.

Group contingencies are powerful techniques. In particular, when group contingencies are used with advertising for success, only team scores should be posted. The teacher should be absolutely sure that all the students on the team can perform the required academic or behavioral task. Group contingencies are best used when a student has learned a new behavior and needs to practice it (maintenance). Group contingencies are much less effective when a student is still learning how to perform the behavior but has not quite mastered it (acquisition). In addition, the group contingency should be designed so that all the teams can win and the contingency is primarily a positive procedure. The teacher can tell if the procedure is positive by asking: (a) Do a variety of teams win the contingency often? and (b) Do the students make positive comments to each other about their performance, or are they singling out a few students for ridicule?

Cautions

A visual feedback system, meaningful information, and positive reactions to the information are the essential components of advertising for success. Even though all of these elements exist in all classrooms as untapped resources, some teachers are reluctant to use advertising for success systems. For example, some teachers may express a concern that students will feel uncomfortable if their work is displayed. The research shows that most students prefer an advertising for success system if it is used correctly (Van Houten, 1980). It is important to post positive information if possible. The more negative the information, the less effective the system will be.

Other teachers are worried that slower learners will be exposed and negatively affected by the system. Students already know who are the fast and slow learners in a classroom (this is particularly true if teachers ability group—i.e. blue bird and black bird reading groups). If an advertising for success system is designed correctly, the posting system can be used to enhance the self-esteem of slow learners. In fact, research shows that students in the bottom half of a classroom academically benefit and improve most by the system (Van Houten, 1984).

Some teachers express a concern about legal issues associated with advertising for success. While some caution is in order, posting student's papers and work has been going on in classrooms for decades. However, posting should not be used to humiliate a student or display only negative information. It is also a good idea for the teacher to inform parents at Back-To-School Night how he/she plans to operate the posting and emphasize that it is a positive system. The teacher will want to explain that he/she will not be posting academic grades, but rather improvement or the number or amount of assignments completed.

The principal's permission and support should also be obtained. For example, the principal may be asked to come into the classroom periodically and look at or make comments about the advertising for success systems. One principal went so far as to take a Polaroid picture of a student who had done exceptionally well academically and behaviorally from each classroom in the school. Each picture with an appropriate label such as "Incredible Worker", or, "One of the Best On-Task Kids" was then posted outside of the office in the main school foyer.

If the teacher is concerned about posting names, secret number codes can be assigned instead. One study showed that posting academic progress by code is just as effective for secondary students as posting by name (Van Houten, 1984).

Case Study

Performance can also be enhanced by using an advertising for success system that displays several behaviors and academic skills for a whole class instead of only one behavior or skill for individual students. For example, the rectangles displayed on the next page represent four classroom rules pertaining to: (1) correct transition time, (2) accuracy of following directions, (3) work completed, and (4) no more than one warning. These behaviors are tracked for the class for the academic subjects of math, reading, and spelling. If the class performs appropriately during an academic period for each of

the four behaviors, a plus (+) is placed in each area. If misbehavior occurs, then a minus (-) is placed in that particular area. The advantage of this system is the simplicity of posting for the whole class across several behaviors. The publicly posted behaviors in this example represent the standard class rules, and the teacher can combine the advertising for success system with an incentive system.

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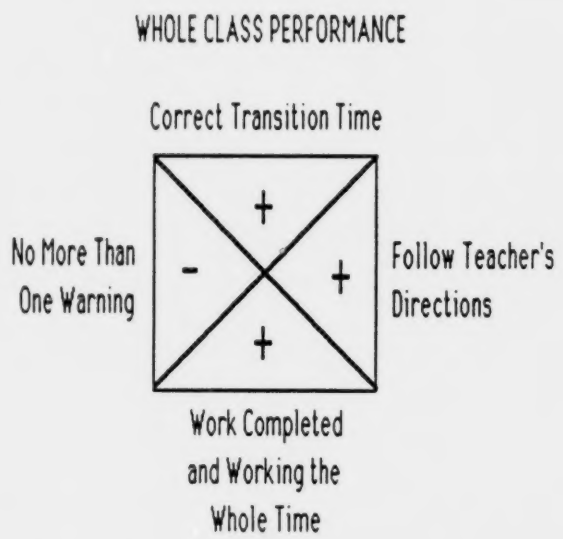
Class Rules

1. No more than one warning
2. Correct transition time (move quietly, go directly to the next activity)
3. Follow the teacher's direction.
4. Complete your work and work the whole time



NUMBER OF PLUSSES

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Best Score
Math						
Reading						
Spelling						

BEST NUMBER OF PLUSSES FOR A DAY

	Math	Reading	Spelling
Team 1			
Team 2			
Team 3			
Team 4			
Team 5			

[1]Partially abstracted from: Colorado Department of Education, School Improvement and Leadership Services Unit (1982). "Indicators of Quality Schools" (unpublished paper); A MacKay (1982). "Project Quest: Teaching strategies and pupil achievement." Occasional Papers Series, Centre for Research in Teaching, University of Alberta; S.C. Purkey and M.S. Smith (1983). Effective schools: A review. *Elementary School Journal*, 83, 427-52.

Reductive Procedures:

Time-Out and Other Related Techniques

by William R. Jenson, Ph.D.

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Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ☑ The different variations of time-out.
- ☑ The rationale for time-out and the reasons underlying its effectiveness.
- ☑ The "do's" and "don'ts" of time-out.
- ☑ Ways to maximize the effectiveness of time-out.
- ☑ Ways to reduce time-out's effectiveness.
- ☑ Legal and procedural issues surrounding the use of time-out.

What is Time-Out?

There are several misconceptions about time-out. Some believe that time-out is placing a child in a secluded room, making the child sit in a corner, or even sending a child to in-school suspension. Time-out is more than these limited examples. Time-out can be defined as: *removing a child from a reinforcing envrionment and placing him or her in a nonreinforcing environment contingent on a specific misbehavior.*

It can be seen from this definition that time-out is not limited to a specific place or location. Instead, the main idea is that time-out must be less reinforcing than the situation in which the misbehavior occurs. If a classroom in which a misbehavior occurs is stale and not reinforcing and a teacher places a child in the school office (which may be more lively than the classroom), then the teacher is actually reinforcing the child. The school office, in this example, is not time-out; rather, it is a positively reinforcing environment. It can also be seen from this example that the use of time-out is contingent on a child misbehaving. It is assumed that if a child misbehaves and time-out is used, then the misbehavior will decrease. This means time-out is an aversive consequence because the misbehavior should decrease through the use of time-out.

The Time-out Continuum

The nonreinforcing environments that are used in time-out can be conceptualized on a continuum. The least restrictive part of this continuum leaves a student in his classroom at his desk or in the instructional setting. An intermediate form of time-out may remove the student from his desk and place him in a corner of the classroom. The most restrictive form of time-out involves removing the student from his classroom and placing him in a separate room. Teachers should always begin with the least restrictive time-out unless a student's behavior is dangerous to self, others, property, or if the IEP recommends its use. If less restrictive forms of time-out are not effective, then a teacher should proceed along the continuum until an effective procedure is found.

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Types of Time-Out

Some of these procedures are straightforward, while others are more complex and require more planning.

1. Planned Ignoring: This is the simplest form of time-out. Planned ignoring involves the systematic removal of social reinforcement (attention) by the teacher for a specific amount of time. When the student misbehaves, the teacher breaks eye contact, turns away, and stops all social interaction with the student. In essence, the student is placed in a less reinforcing environment because the teacher does not interact with him or her. Planned ignoring assumes that the teacher's social attention is reinforcing. If it is not, then this procedure will not work. The teacher should also be prepared for an extinction burst in the early stages of the procedure. In an extinction burst, the student tries harder by misbehaving to get the teacher's attention. If the teacher falters and attends (even with negative attention) to the student during a burst of misbehavior, then the student is reinforced and will be more resistive to this technique in the future.

2. Withdrawal Of Materials: This is the next step in the time-out gradient. With the withdrawal of materials, a student's academic or work materials are withdrawn without comment and the student simply sits at his desk. The rest of the class and teacher ignore the student until the materials are returned at the end of the time-out period. This form of time-out is effective if the student is relatively compliant and will sit without disturbing other students. It does not work if the student is disruptive. However, withdrawal of materials is an easy time-out procedure that is often overlooked.

3. Timing Out an Object (Bumpy Bunny): This technique is more of a response cost procedure than a time-out procedure, but it works well with younger students. In timing out an object, a favored object or toy (e.g., a stuffed toy like Bumpy Bunny) that a student is allowed to have in the classroom, is taken away and timed-out for a specified period of time when the student misbehaves. The object can be placed on the teacher's desk or in a special time-out drawer. The technique works well when a student is allowed to have the object on their person or desk

and is viewed as a special privilege. Small toys, pictures of family, hats, a special pencil sharpener, or something to play with at recess or free time work well as the objects. For older students, a Walkman or Gameboy would be very suitable. A problem with this procedure occurs if the student plays with the object during class time. The contingency should be an automatic object time-out for playing with the object without permission. An additional problem can occur if a student resists giving the object to the teacher. In general, however, this is a useful technique that may be overlooked.

4. Time-Out Ribbon: The time-out ribbon technique is a procedure that was developed by Foxx and Shapiro (1978). To implement this technique, a teacher needs to make a simple ribbon that a student wears around his neck. While a student is wearing the ribbon, he or she participates in normal classroom activities. However, when the student misbehaves, the ribbon is removed for a period of time and the student is ignored by the teacher and the class. This procedure allows the student to stay at his desk. The ribbon works very well with younger students and students with developmental delays. Most students feel that the ribbon is special and like it. The author has used the time-out ribbon procedure with several students when other time-out procedures have failed for particularly difficult behaviors such as classroom masturbation and inappropriate laughter. The time-out ribbon shares the same problems as other time-out procedures. In addition, the procedure is inappropriate if the student resists the teacher's removal of the ribbon.

5. Contingent Observation Time-Out: With contingent observation, the student is removed from his chair at his desk for misbehaving and is usually placed in a chair away from the main classroom activities for a short period of time. The student is allowed to observe the classroom and its activities, but not allowed to participate. While in the chair, the student is ignored by the teacher and other students.

In theory, this time-out procedure is effective because a student is not allowed to interact but, instead, observes what he is missing by not participating.

In theory, this time-out procedure is effective because the student is not allowed to interact, but, instead observes what he is missing. Contingent observation works well with compliant students with minor problems who will sit in a chair. It does not work well with students who repeatedly get out of the chair or try to interact with other students.

6. No-Look Time-Out: This technique is essentially the same as contingent observation, except that the student is not allowed to observe the classroom activities. Usually, the student is placed in a part of the classroom that does not allow him to see the classroom activities. For example, the student might be placed in the corner of the classroom. Or, a chair might be turned to the wall or a student might be placed behind a screen. This is a more restrictive form of time-out and it is useful when planned ignoring or contingent observation has not worked. Problems occur with no-look time-out if the student will not stay in the chair, throws objects over a screen, or makes disturbing noises. It is important that no-look time-out does not include placing a student in a separate room that might be contained within a classroom (e.g., a closet, bathroom, or empty room). Placing a student in these kinds of places is

one of the most restrictive form of time-out.

7. Head Down Time-Out: A simpler form of a visual screening time-out procedure that has been used by teachers for a long time is simply a head down on the desk procedure. For time-out, a student is told to close his eyes and put his head on the desk for a specified period of time. This procedure is like a visual screen in that the student cannot see what is going on in the classroom; however, it does not require a cloth screen. Head on the desk works for relatively compliant students, but is ineffective if a student refuses. Students should never be physically forced to put their head down.

8. Time-Out to the Hall: This is a common form of time-out that teachers frequently employ using a desk or chair that is placed in the hall. Hall time-out is used because the student is too disruptive for a less restrictive form of time-out. A major problem with hall time-out is that the student is left unsupervised in a hall where other students and adults pass by and may talk to or pay attention to the student. In addition, the student may have access to all types of potential sources of reinforcement (e.g., drinking fountains, other student's lockers, coats on a rack, and running in the hall). Overall, hall time-out is an ineffective form of time-out and generally should not be used.

9. Time-Out to Another Classroom: Time-out to another classroom can be an effective form of time-out. However, the teacher should follow a set of preplanned steps: (1) arrange with another teacher to use his classroom; (2) pick a different grade level classroom (generally, a two year difference in grade level is best); (3) decide on the length of time for the contingency (e.g., 30 minutes); (4) have a desk or table set up for the student to work; (5) have academic work materials available for the student, and (6) offer to reciprocate with an in class time-out program for the teacher who is willing to take your student.

10. In-School Suspension: This procedure is a form of extended time-out where a student is suspended from the classroom for long periods of time (e.g., one day) and required to work in another school setting. Generally, the in-school suspension environment can be a separate classroom set aside just for in-school suspension. It is essential that students be supervised for the entire time they spend in in-school suspension. Also, students should be required to do academic work in this environment.

11. Time-Out to a Room: Time-out to a room involves placing a student in a separate room that is designated as the "time-out room". It is critical that this room be clean, well-lighted, not frightening, and not a danger to a student. In addition, the time-out room should not be used for any other purpose (i.e., storage, mail, printing) than time-out. A person should always be outside the room and a window or peep hole (i.e., 180 degree apartment house peep hole) should be installed so the student can be observed. It is also best to design the room so that the adult on the outside must hold the door handle in a locked position. When the door handle is released by the adult, the door handle automatically springs back into an unlocked position and the student can simply push the door from the inside and get out. It is best that there is either no door handle inside the room or that the door handle on the student's side does not turn. This will avoid a struggle between the adult and student. Having an adult hold the door handle in the locked position ensures that (1) there will

always be a person outside of the door when a student is in the room, and (2) that a student is never left unattended.

12. Visual Screening Time-Out: The visual screening time-out technique is a rarely used procedure. It is a form of time-out that is sometimes used with students with mentally retardation or autism who use their eyes when self-stimulating. The student wears a cloth headband and, when he or she engages in misbehavior such as self-stimulating with their hands or inappropriate bizarre laughter, the band is placed around their eyes for a short period of time. The student remains at his or her desk in the classroom. If they try to take the band from their eyes, they are gently manually guided to put their hands down. This procedure works well with students who would self-stimulate with their eyes if other types of time-out have failed. It is not a procedure that would be used with students with minor behavior problems. It should be reserved for students with more severe disorders.

The major drawback with this procedure is that someone (aide, volunteer, parent, or teacher) must stay with the student when the procedure is used in case the student tries to remove the band. It is also important that the headband be made of soft material with elastic in the back. The band should never totally cover the student's head or obstruct breathing by covering the nose.

13. Movement Suppression Time-out: This time-out procedure is probably the most restrictive form of time-out and should be used for only the most severe types of behavior (e.g., self-injury or aggression). In movement suppression, a student is required to stand against a wall, touching the wall with his or her chin, both hands behind the back with one hand on top of the other, and both feet touching the wall. An adult stands behind the student and firmly reprimands if movement or talk occurs (e.g. "Don't Move" or "Don't Talk"). Generally, this procedure lasts about three minutes. Teachers are cautioned that specific training is essential for correct implementation. This procedure should not be used without team/administrative involvement.

Procedures for Implementing Time-Out

Time-out has great potential for misuse and abuse if staff are untrained and each person implements the time-out procedures differently. To ensure that procedures are followed, it is best to:

Time-out has a great potential for misuse and abuse if staff are untrained and each person implements the time-out procedures differently.

1. Require each staff member to read the procedures and take a test on the content. Keep the test results on file and periodically review them with each staff member.

2. Keep the tests on file for each staff member to document their basic knowledge of the procedure. This helps answer the question "Were your staff trained in using the procedure before they tried it on a student?"

3. Have each staff member experience the time-

out procedure (i.e., role play the procedure and have them spend a time-out period in the time-out environment). Having the staff experience the procedure can be used to answer questions such as "Have you ever tried the procedure?" or "Did you try the procedure on yourself before you tried it on a student?"

4. Have the time-out procedures always on file and have the procedures taped to the time-out room door. If the procedures are also on the time-out room door, it is difficult for a staff member to say they have never seen them or they have forgotten the procedures.

The time-out procedures are designed to be implemented in a step-by-step sequence. The procedures are as follows:

1. The time-out room should only be implemented after it has been discussed and agreed to by the student's parents. The procedure should be described on the student's IEP with the inappropriate behaviors objectively defined.

2. The "What is Time-Out?" form should be signed by the parents and a staff member.

3. The full procedure should be described to the student before the procedure is implemented. It is a good idea to show the student and the parents the time-out room if one is used.

4. A Time-Out Room Log should be maintained and used each time the time-out room procedure is used. This log should include: (1) student's name, (2) person responsible for the student while they are in time-out, (3) date the procedure was used, (4) time the student went in the room, (5) time the student came out, (6) the behavior that resulted in the procedure being used, and (7) a comments section for reporting unusual incidents.

5. The inappropriate behaviors for which the time-out room procedure is used should be very serious (e.g., aggression, property destruction, tantrums, severe noncompliance). The procedure should not be used for minor behaviors (e.g., crying, off-task, tardiness, classroom talk-outs).

6. The length of time for time-out generally works out to one minute per year of the age of the student (i.e., a 6 year old student would have a 6 minute time-out, a 10 year old have a 10 minute time-out).

7. A timer (e.g., a 60 minute kitchen timer) should be set. When the timer rings, the student should be quiet for at least 30 seconds before the student is released. If the student is released during a tantrum or while screaming, these behaviors are reinforced.

Under no circumstances should a child be told to go to time-out and come out when they can "behave."

Under no circumstances should a student be told to go to time-out and come out when they can "behave." The staff member should control the total time-out period.

8. As a rule, a student should not spend more

than 55 consecutive minutes in the time-out room. The exact maximum length will vary in different states and school districts. The teacher should know what this policy is for their school district.

9. For all forms of time-out, when a student misbehaves, he or she should be told to go to time-out. After the student has been given this direction, the staff member should not talk with him or her (either while going to time-out or while the student is in time-out).

10. If the student refuses to go to the time-out room, the staff members can use manual guidance to escort the student to time-out if they are reasonably sure they can manage the student without a danger to themselves or the student. If there is such a danger, the staff member may need the help of additional staff. Specific training is required before manual guidance is employed.

11. If a student refuses to go to the time-out room, the staff may want to add another 1 minute to the time-out period each time a staff member requests the student to go to time-out. For example, if a 10 year old boy refuses to go to time-out and argues, then the staff may say "Now it is 11 minutes". If the student refuses to comply after your second request, enlist the assistance of additional staff to help place the student in time-out.

12. If the student defecates or urinates while in time-out, he/she should be required to clean up the mess under supervision.

13. If a student destroys part of the time-out room, then the parent should be consulted. Possibly, a special toy or privilege can be kept until the student helps repair the damage (after school or on a weekend).

14. If the student refuses to come out of time-out after the procedure is over, then wait. A student can be left in the time-out room with the door open while the teacher or aide stands outside ignoring him or her. The worst thing to do is to plead with the student to come out of time-out. Wait: sooner or later he or she will exit.

Maximizing the Effectiveness of Time-Out

There are several techniques that can make time-out more effective in the classroom. Simple procedural adaptations can change an ineffective time-out procedure to an effective procedure. These techniques are as follows:

1. The Classroom Must be Reinforcing: One of the common problems that makes time-out ineffective is an unpleasant classroom atmosphere. Boredom, lack of stimulation, and an emphasis on negative management techniques significantly reduce the reinforcing power of the classroom. Remember the definition of time-out involves being placed in a nonreinforcing environment contingent upon inappropriate behavior. If a classroom is

If a classroom is boring, the child may prefer to spend time in time-out rather than in the classroom. Make an effort to increase the reinforcing value of the classroom.

unpleasant, the student may prefer to spend time in time-out rather than in the classroom. Make an effort to increase the reinforcing value of the classroom. For example, set a goal of a set number of social reinforcers that you will give to the class. All of these reinforcers do not have to be directed to problem students. For example, make a rule that you will give the class at least 30 social reinforcers each day (that is 5 per hour over a six hour day). The problem student should get at least 5 of these reinforcers. In addition, improve the reinforcing value of the classroom by: (1) adding mystery motivators, (2) implementing classroom games, (3) adding some snacks, (4) putting in a classroom spinner for good behavior, or (5) varying the classroom schedule with a story or free time activity.

2. Reinforce the Student for Not Going to Time-Out: It sometimes helps to develop a contract with a student where he is reinforced for not going to time-out. In a sense, you are reinforcing behaviors that are incompatible with the behaviors that lead to time-out. It is important to specify the behaviors that lead to time-out such as aggression, swearing, noncompliance, and tantruming so the student can avoid them. A contract might stipulate that a student will get 15 minutes free time plus the chance at a mystery motivator if he avoids time-out for the day.

3. Explaining Time-Out to the Student: It generally helps to explain the time-out procedure before it is begun. The explanation should include a description of the behaviors that lead to time-out, what types of time-out will be used, and what will happen if they resist the time-out procedure. The explanation should be provided when things are calm in the classroom. The teacher should not argue with the student about the procedures or negotiate the procedures. They should be handled in a matter of fact way.

4. Combining the Time-Out Procedure with Warnings and Rule Statement Procedures: It helps to use a warning procedure that time-out will be used if a request is not complied with. For example, a teacher might imbed the word "need" in a request to signal that time-out will follow in a short time if the request is not followed. For instance, the teacher might say, "Jeffrey you need to stop arguing with me". If Jeffrey does not stop, then time-out would be used.

Teachers can also re-state the rule, before using time-out. Rule statements would include statements such as "The classroom rule is no hitting", and then the student would be placed in time-out. Rule stating is different from a warning procedure because the student has already broken a classroom rule. However, rule stating helps because it underscores which behaviors lead to time-out. It is important not to argue about whether a rule was broken or other extenuating circumstances. Simply state the classroom rule and then proceed with the time-out procedure.

It is important not to argue with a student about whether a rule was broken or other extenuating circumstances. Simply state the classroom rule and then proceed with the time-out procedure.

5. Having to Sit and Watch: It helps with some students if they have to sit and watch for a brief period of time after a time-out (to another classroom, in-school suspension, or to a room). For example, a

student who has returned from a time-out room would have to sit in a chair for 2 minutes and watch the classroom activities before he was allowed to go to his desk. Watching appears to settle some students down after a time-out period.

6. Varying the Time-Out Period: Some students want to control any situation including the time they spend in time-out. These students often tell a teacher that the time-out period is over and they should be out. If a time-out procedure was initially effective but lost its potency and the student is very controlling, then varying the actual time period is a good procedure. For example, if the student is eight years old and you have been using an 8 minute period of time, it might be more effective to randomly vary the time around an 8 minute average. For instance, one period might be 6 minutes, one period 8 minutes, and another period 10 minutes. It helps not to tell the student the exact time you are using, but get the permission from the student's parent to use this variation.

7. Varying Time-Out with Other Procedures: It can also be useful to randomly vary the time-out procedure with other mildly aversive procedures. This is particularly effective for students who appear to have adapted to the time-out technique. To randomly vary a procedure, the teacher would pick three procedures such as time-out, overcorrection, and response cost. When a student misbehaves, the teacher randomly implements one of the three procedures. It is important to preselect the techniques and the order in which they will be used. Of course, this procedure will be far less effective if the student is told which technique will be used next.

8. Combining Time-Out with a Group Contingency: If a student is socially reinforced by his peers for misbehaving, it becomes very difficult to change the misbehavior. Many students with behavioral disorders are especially reinforced by the effects of their misbehavior on peers (i.e., smiling, snickering, clapping, or being congratulated for going to time-out). A simple test to see if a student is reinforced by his peers is to watch the student just after he misbehaves. If he looks around at his peers or solicits support, he is being socially reinforced. To counter such pressure, a group contingency can be used. The whole group can lose a privilege if a problem student goes to time-out or can earn an extra privilege if he does not go to time-out.

9. Using a Tape Recorder with Time-Out: Students sometimes misbehave in public places where there are no time-out facilities. For example, a student might misbehave on a field trip or while riding a school bus. In such cases, a teacher can record the misbehavior on a small tape recorder. This procedure works best if the student verbally argues or loudly tantrums. When the student and teachers return to school where there are time-out facilities, the tape is played back to the student who is then sent to time-out. With the advent of video camcorders, this procedure might be used with video recording and later played back. A video camera would be particularly useful for nonverbal misbehavior that an audio recorder would miss.

10. Recreating the Scene: This technique can also be used for misbehaviors that have already occurred and where a time delay before time-out can be used. Essentially, with recreating the scene, a student is required to recreate the misbehavior under the supervision of an adult and then is consequated with a time-out procedure. For example, Van Houten

used this technique with an autistic student who bit other students. The student was then seated on the floor in the same place he had been when he was bitten and instructed to cry when Shawn's face came close to his cheek. Next, the experimenter firmly grasped Shawn's head with a palm on each cheek to ensure complete control and thereby preclude the possibility of Shawn's biting the student again. Shawn's head was guided toward the student's cheek and his teeth exposed by gently pulling back his lips. As Shawn's teeth came within several inches of the boy's face, Shawn received a loud reprimand in the form of "Don't bite" while the experimenter placed a pointed finger in front of his face. Shawn was then quickly taken to the nearest corner in the play area and a 1-minute movement suppression time-out procedure was applied. This procedure was then repeated two more times.

The recreating the scene procedure is very restrictive and should be used with only the most serious behaviors. However, it is extremely effective for behaviors that are not directly observed. In addition to biting, it has been used with tantrums (foot stamping) and stealing behaviors. Again, a teacher should use this procedure only after the student's parents and the victim's parents give their consent.

Reducing Time-Out's Effectiveness

Just as there are a set of procedures to improve the effectiveness of time-out, there are also procedures that reduce the effectiveness of time-out. They are:

1. Over-Explaining Time-Out: It is important to explain time-out procedures to students and orient them to the time-out facilities. However, once is enough. Many teachers think they must continually explain time-out; sometimes they argue with students about time-out procedures. Sometimes teachers use explanation after explanation because they are reluctant to use time-out, thinking that if they explain the procedures to their students again, then they may not need to use time-out. Similarly, teachers frequently will over-explain and threaten. For example, a teacher might say "do you understand that if you continue to misbehave, I'm going to use time-out with you?"

Repeated explanations combined with threats reduce the effectiveness of time-out. Explain it very well once, and then implement the procedure.

Repeated explanations combined with threats reduce the effectiveness of time-out. Explain it very well once, and then implement the procedure. If you feel the student still does not understand, wait until you are in a neutral situation and then explain the procedure again.

2. Talking During the Time-Out Procedure: This problem occurs in two ways. First, the teacher talks with the student while they are going to time-out. It is important to keep the conversation to a minimum while going to time-out. Explaining to students what they did wrong, emotional reprimands, or just plain feeling guilty should not be reasons to start a conversation while implementing the time-out procedure. Second, once the student is in time-out, the teacher should not respond to him or her. This does not mean that the teacher should not supervise or

observe the student. However, neither does it mean that the teacher should talk to the student in time-out. Common mistakes involving talking with a student in time-out include such instances as:

1. Answering questions concerning how much more time they will be in time-out.
2. Arguing about the consequential behaviors or the fairness of being placed in time-out.
3. Responding to threats about what they are going to do when they get out of time-out.
4. Trying to calm the student down or to urge him or her to stop tantruming.

Once a student is in time-out, he or she should be ignored and communication kept to zero, unless there is an emergency (even if they swear at you).

3. Slowly Increasing the Time Period Used with Time-Out (The Swimming Pool Effect): There is a real temptation to start with very short periods of time for time-out and to slowly increase them. For example, a teacher may use only 30 seconds of time-out for a 7 year old student. At first, 30 seconds may be effective, but it will slowly lose its effectiveness because it is too short. Then the teacher may increase 30 seconds to 1 minute, then 2 minutes, then 5 minutes, and so on up to excessively long periods of time (over 30 minutes). When this happens, it is similar to jumping into a cold swimming pool by first putting a toe in, then another toe, then a foot, then a leg, until the whole body is submerged. You are slowly adapted to the cool water, and this is exactly what happens when very short periods of time are used with time-out and slowly increased. We adapt the student to long periods of time-out. This is a trap. The teacher should use the most effective time period that will make time-out work. This is generally one minute for each year of age. A seven year old student would need seven minutes of time-out.

4. Letting the Students Determine Their Own Time-Out Period: Some teachers think a student should determine the length of time-out. A teacher might say, "Go to time-out and come out when you can behave". This is a mistake, particularly with very difficult students. They will go to time-out, spend a very short period of time, and then return and misbehave again. Self-determined time-out periods do not work. Teachers must determine the length of time, and it should not be negotiable. Again, one minute per year is a good guideline for difficult students.

5. Not Using a Quiet Time at the End of Time-Out: At the end of the designated time-out period, the student should be quiet for a short period of time (e.g., 30 seconds). If the student is let out of time-out during a tantrum, when they are screaming or threatening, then they are reinforced for these behaviors. For example, at the end of seven minutes for a seven year old, if the student is screaming and beating on the door, then the teacher should wait until he or she is quiet. It is a real mistake to say to the student, "If you are quiet, then time-out will end". It is better to set a kitchen timer that rings after the seven minute time-out period; the bell will signal that time-out is over.

6. Extracting a Confession: There is a tendency for some teachers to have a student admit or describe the misbehavior that led to time-out. This frequently happens when a student leaves time-out. A teacher may want students to acknowledge their misbehavior or to problem-solve behavior alternatives. Unfor-

tunately, "extracting a confession" (so described by Dr. Gerald Patterson) reduces the effectiveness of time-out. If a teacher feels a need to review the student's misbehavior after the time-out period, it is better to simply re-state a precision command-"I need you not to....(the misbehavior)" and leave it at that.

Legal Issues and Cautions

1. Informed consent must be obtained from a student's parent(s) or guardian(s) before a time-out room can be used. The procedures should be explained to the parents; they should be shown the time-out room and they should sign the "What is Time-Out?" form.

2. The behavior identified on the "What is Time-Out?" form for use with time out rooms should be serious or very maladaptive behaviors (e.g., aggression, severe noncompliance, tantrums, property destruction). For less serious behaviors (e.g, crying, whining, talking out in class), other less intrusive procedures should be used.

3. When using the time-out room, a time-out log should always be signed, dated, target behavior, time in, and time out should be maintained each time time-out is used.

4. A time-out room should never be frightening, dark, or unventilated. The time-out space should merely be boring.

5. A time-out room should always be fitted with a window or peep hole so the student can be observed.

6. A person should always be outside of the room and never leave the outside of the room when time-out in a separate room is used.

7. Items such as belts, shoes, or the contents of pockets (i.e., pencils, pens, paper clips, or knives) should be removed when a time-out room is used with students with severe behavioral disorders.

8. Excessively long durations should not be used with time-out. For most students, a minute per year of age of the student is a reasonable guideline. Time periods should always be decided upon by the IEP team before the procedure is actually used because angry adults tend to use excessively long periods of time.

9. It is always best to use a time-out room door in which the student can push open the door from the inside and exit if the door is left unattended by an adult.

10. Assess all staff's knowledge concerning the use of time-out and keep the results on file to document that all staff have been trained.

11. Post the time-out procedures on the time-out room door.

The Do's and Don'ts of Time-out

1. Do explain the total procedure to the student before implementing time-out. Don't start the procedure without first explaining time-out to the student in a calm, unemotional manner.

2. Do prepare a time-out setting for the student which is clean, well lighted, and ventilated. Don't just pick any available location. Make sure that it isn't dark, too confining, dangerous, or not ventilated.

3. Do pick a place or situation for time-out that is boring and less reinforcing than the classroom. Don't pick a place that is scary or more reinforcing than the classroom (for example, sitting in the hall).

4. Do use a set of structured verbal requests with a student such as the recommended precision request format. Don't threaten a student repeatedly with time-out.

5. Do remain calm. Don't talk with a student when being taken to time-out. Don't get into a verbal exchange with a student on the way to time-out, or while in time-out.

6. Do place a student in time-out for a set period of time which you control. Don't tell a student to come out of time-out when he or she is "ready to behave".

7. Do require the student to be quiet for 30 seconds at the end of the time-out period, before they are let out. Don't let a student out of time-out while crying, screaming, yelling, or tantruming.

8. Do use shorter periods of time for time-out; one minute per year of age is a good guideline. Don't use excessively long periods of time.

9. Do require the student to complete the request that led to time-out or missed academic work when they come out. Don't allow a student to avoid compliance with a request or missed academic work by going to time-out.

10. Do have someone responsible for the student while in time-out, preferably equipped with audible signaling device (egg timer) to let them know when a student should exit. Don't put a student in time-out without a responsible person checking on the student or knowing what to do in an emergency.

11. Do ignore a student who says he likes time-out or will not come out of time-out. Don't beg a student to come out of time-out.

12. Do make a student clean up a mess that is made in time-out. Don't let a student make a mess in the time-out room and avoid cleaning it.

13. Do add up to a couple of minutes to the length of time-out for each request you have to make to a student who refuses to go to time-out. Don't threaten, yell, beg, or fight with a student to get them to go to time-out.

14. Do keep data on the use of time-out such as: who is responsible for the student, time in and time out, reason for being placed in time-out, and date. Don't assume you can remember these details at a later date or don't need the data.

15. Do write the basic steps and procedures on how to use time-out in your classroom, have the staff read them, and post them along with the data sheets on the door of the time-out room.

16. Do get a parent's permission before you use a time-out room, show them the time-out room, have them sign a permission sheet, have them read the

time-out procedures, and include it in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Don't assume it is all right with the parents if you use the procedures, or that it doesn't need to be included on an IEP.

17. Do change the time-out procedure or parameters (length of time, place, or type of time-out) if the data indicate that it is not working over a reasonable period of time (two weeks). Don't assume that time-out will work for every student, or for all types of inappropriate behaviors, in all types of settings.

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Time-Out

Granite School District

Time-Out Room Policy and Procedures

by

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and
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The time-out procedures offered in this manual are general guidelines and should be interpreted with caution in relation to the least restrictive interventions policy of your state, district, and school.

Introduction

The Granite School District Time-Out Room Policy and Procedures is in compliance with the Utah State Office of Education policy on "Selection of Least Restrictive Behavioral Interventions for Use with Students with Disabilities" (LRBI). This document provides administrators, teachers, and parents with specific guidelines for the use of time-out in the school setting. Time-out should be used only as one part of a comprehensive behavior management plan which includes high rates of positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior. This plan must be developed and approved through the IEP process.

Time-out is a shortened form of the term "time-out from positive reinforcement." The idea of time-out is to remove the student from an activity which is reinforcing (once which he/she enjoys) and place him/her in an environment which provides no reinforcement. The procedure is very much like having a child sit in a chair at home for a short period of time for misbehavior. There are a number of ways time-out can be used, ranging from non-exclusionary time-out procedures (e.g., planned ignoring, withdrawal of materials, seat away) to exclusionary time-out procedures (e.g., time-out in another classroom, time-out in a time-out room). For the purpose of this policy, the term "time-out" will refer exclusively to time-out in a time-out room.

Time-out is widely recognized as an effective intervention for decreasing the frequency of severe problem behaviors such as physical aggression toward others or objects. Extensive research has shown that in order to maximize the procedure's effectiveness, a high rate of reinforcement must be available in the instructional setting. It is also important that students not be allowed to avoid tasks by going to time-out and that reinforcement is not available during the time-out period. This is why it is not advisable to use a child's bedroom at home or the hall or office at school for time-out.

Definition

Time-out is a behavior reductive technique for use with severe misbehavior. Its purpose is to reduce the severity or intensity of the severe misbehavior in the future. The procedure consists of removing a student form an environment which provides reinforcement to one which provides no reinforcement.

Use of Time-Out

1. Time-out must be used only for the most severe behaviors (e.g., physical aggression toward others or objects, extreme noncompliance) and only after positive intervention procedures have been tried and found to be unsuccessful. The procedure must never be used for minor inappropriate behaviors (e.g., talking out, off task).

2. As a Level III intervention within the LRBI policy time-out in a time-out room requires permission of Granite School District's Local Human Rights Committee prior to its implementation.

3. Prior written parental permission is also required before using a time-out room. Parents must sign the LRBI Behavior Interventions Consent Form to which is attached the Time-out Information for Parents sheet. (See samples on pgs. 24-25 of this document). The signed LRBI form and Time-out Information for Parents sheet must be attached to the student's IEP.

4. All teachers and instructional assistants using time-out must be trained in advance and must complete the Time-out Room Test. A copy of each staff member's test must be kept on file and periodically reviewed with her/him.

5. The specific target behavior(s) for which time-out will be used must be defined on LRBI Behavior Interventions Consent Form. Appropriate behaviors which will replace the behavior targeted for reduction must also be defined on the form. Systematic reinforcement must be implemented to increase the frequency of the replacement behaviors. Social Skills training must be provided to enhance the student's repertoire of appropriate behavior.

6. Data must be collected on the target behavior in order to assess the effectiveness of the time-out procedure. All data collection must include a baseline measure (the rate before an intervention is implemented).

7. The time period for the length of time-out must be specified in advance. Generally, one minute per year of age of the student is appropriate (e.g. six minutes for a six-year-old student, ten minutes for a ten-year-old student). Under no

circumstances must a student be told to go to time-out and come out when he/she can behave. The staff member in charge must always determine the length of the time-out period.

8. The Granite School District Time-out Room Policy and Procedures must be posted in the classroom, on or near the time-out room.

9. An adult must be in the same room in relatively close proximity to the time-out room during the entire time-out procedure and must make frequent visual checks to ensure student safety and monitor student behavior.

10. If a student urinates or defecates while in the time-out room, it is customary for him/her to clean the room under adult supervision at the end of the time-out period.

11. If a student damages the time-out room, it is customary for the parents to be contacted and consulted and arrangements made for the student to assist in restitution.

Procedures

1. Before beginning to use time-out as a management procedure, identify and operationalize the behavior(s) which will result in its use. Be sure the student is afforded due process by understanding the behavior ahead of time. An explanation of the behavior may consist of telling the student, demonstrating the behavior, providing feedback and answering any questions the student may have ahead of time. The student must also be told how long the time-out period will last.

2. If the misbehavior occurs, identify it. Tell the student in a calm, "neutral" manner: "That's fighting , you need to go to time-out." Tell the student to remove jewelry, belt and shoes. Tell the student to empty pockets (in order to check for such items as pens, pencils, paper clips, knives, etc.). Socks should be checked for these types of items also. If the student does not comply with the request to empty pockets, ask for back-up and empty pockets yourself. No other conversation should ensue. Ignore any questions or any statements the student may make as an excuse for misbehavior. If you encounter resistance from the student, you should:

a. Gently but firmly lead the student to the time-out room.

b. Require the student to clean up any mess resulting from resistance to time-out at the end of the time-out period before he/she may return to classroom activities.

c. Be prepared to add time to the time-out period if the student refuses to go or is physically aggressive (hits, kicks, turns over furniture, etc.). If the student refuses to go to time -out, add one minute to the time, up to two additional minutes. If the student continues to refuse at this point, request help from back-up staff to place the student in time-out. It may be useful to plan a one-word signal ahead of time to communicate to staff that help is needed immediately.

3. Once a student enters the time-out room, the time begins. Check the clock or set a timer. Release from time-out is contingent upon a minimum duration of time-out (generally one minute per year of age). Furthermore, the student is not released from time-out until he/she has had a short quiet time (generally 30-60 seconds) at the end of the time-out period. The IEP team will always make a final determination as to what is an appropriate minimum duration of time-out as well as the amount of required quiet time for each student.

4. As a rule, a student should not spend more than 55 minutes in time-out for each occurrence of the targeted behavior. Any time-out period which exceeds 55 minutes must adhere to the Process for Implementation of Emergency Procedures outlined in the proposed LRBI policy. *CAUTION: ANY TIME A TIME-OUT PERIOD EXCEEDS 55 MINUTES THE PARENTS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR MUST BE NOTIFIED WITHIN 24 HOURS.*

5. Once the time-out period has ended, return the student to the on-going classroom activity, making sure the student is required to complete the task he/she was engaged in prior to the time-out period. This will ensure that students do not purposely avoid unpleasant tasks by going to time-out. Do not ask the

student why he/she needed to go to time-out. Do not comment on how well the student behaved while in time-out.

6. Record the use of time-out on the Time-out Log. The log should be posted on the time-out room and should include the following information:

a. The student's name

b. The date the procedure was used

c. The behavior resulting in time-out

d. The time the student was placed in time-out

e. The time the student was released from time-out

f. The total time in time-out

g. The student's behavior while in time-out

h. The initial of the staff member who placed the student in time-out.

7. Graph time-out data and review often (on at least a weekly basis) to determine the effectiveness of the time-out procedure. With input from team members, adjust the IEP behavior management plan accordingly. Scheduled intervention review dates will be specified by the Granite School District Local Human Rights Committee.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS

CONSENT FORM

Student Name _____ Date _____

School _____ Grade ____ DOB _____

1. Target Behavior (operational definition): _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Baseline Date: _____

Summarize Data and Attach Data Sheets: _____

_____

_____

2. Replacement Behavior (operational definition): _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Baseline Date: _____

Summarize Data and Attach Data Sheets: _____

_____

_____

3. Documentation of Level I and II Interventions Used Unsuccessfully (*attach data sheets*):

_____

_____

_____

4. Corresponding IEP Goal and/or Terminal Objective: _____

_____

_____

_____

5. Recommended Behavioral Intervention Procedures:

A. Appropriate Behavior to Increase and Positive Reinforcement Methods/Schedule:

_____

_____

_____

B. Recommended Behavior Reduction Procedures: _____

_____

The level this procedure falls under: _____

C. Specifically describe the Intrusive Procedure (*attach a written program if necessary*):

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Data Collection (summarize method and schedule): _____

_____

_____

7. Scheduled Intervention Review Date: _____

8. Cautions or Side Effects: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I have read the above information and hereby give my informed consent for the specified procedures to be used with the target student. (All must sign and date.)

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

_____ _____

Teacher's Signature Date

_____ _____

Administrator's Signature Date

Time-Out Information for Parents

Time-out is a technique that is used to decrease the frequency of severe problem behaviors such as physical aggression toward others or objects. The procedure is very much like having your child sit in a chair at home for a short period of time for misbehavior. The idea of time-out is to remove the student from an activity or environment that is reinforcing (one which he/she enjoys) and to place him/her in an environment that provides no reinforcement. For example, if the student is in the classroom where praise and tokens or points may be earned for appropriate behavior and she/he hits another student, she/he would be removed immediately to a time-out room (where no reinforcers may be earned) for a specific period of time.

The length of the time-out period is set in advance. Generally, one minute per year of age of the student is appropriate (e.g. six minutes for a six-year-old student, ten minutes for a ten-year-old student). A quiet time (usually 30-60 seconds) is required at the end of the time-out period before the student is released to return to the classroom activity. These times are determined by the IEP team prior to the use of time-out. Particularly when time-out is first used, it may take longer than the predetermined time-out period to get the required amount of quiet time. Any time a time-out period exceeds 55 minutes, you will be notified by the school staff within 24 hours. In such cases, it is Granite School District's policy to adhere to the process for implementation of emergency procedures as specified by the Utah State Office of Education. If such an occurrence takes place more than once in a week, two times in a month, or a total of four times in a year, it will be addressed by reconvening the IEP team and through the Granite School District Local Human Rights Committee procedures.

The effectiveness of time-out will be systematically and objectively assessed on an on-going basis. You may request a review of the time-out intervention effectiveness at any time.

A staff member is always in attendance when time-out is used. A detailed log of all time-out periods is kept to record the behavior that resulted in the time-out, the date and time the student is placed in time-out, the length of the time-out period and the student's behavior while in time-out.

Possible Side Effects

- Some students may find isolation in a time-out room reinforcing.
- A student may become aggressive or injure himself/herself or school personnel when being taken to a time-out room or while in the time-out room.

Student Name _____.

Length of time-out period _____ min.

Length of quiet time _____ sec.

Parent has received a copy of the Granite School District Time-Out Room Policy and Procedures _____ (parent initial)

_____ (date)

Time-Out Room Log

Student's Name	Date	Target Behavior	Time In	Time Out	Staff	Comments

Time-Out Test

1. It is appropriate to use time-out for off-task behavior if it is a severe problem.

   True _____ False _____

2. When a student is sent to time-out, he/she should be told, "You may come out when you can behave."

   True _____ False _____

3. An adult must be in attendance during the entire time-out procedure.

   True _____ False _____

4. After a student is told to go to time-out, the teacher should immediately empty the student's pockets.

   True _____ False _____

5. A student should be required to clean up any mess resulting from resistance to time-out after the time-out period is over.

   True _____ False _____

6. If a student refuses to go to time-out, one minute should be added to the time, up to ten additional minutes.

   True _____ False _____

7. If the time-out period exceeds 55 minutes more than two times in one month, the IEP team should be consulted about an alternative plan of action.

   True _____ False _____

8. After the time-out period has ended, the student should be returned to the activity he/she was engaged in before time-out.

   True _____ False _____

9. It is appropriate to use the school office, but not the hall for time-out.

   True _____ False _____

10. Time-out should be considered one part of a comprehensive behavior management plan which includes high rates of positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.

    True _____ False _____

11. It is all right to use time-out without parental permission in emergency situations.

    True _____ False _____

12. Behaviors which are incompatible with those resulting in time-out must be defined an systematically reinforced.

    True _____ False _____

13. All data collection should include a baseline measure.

    True _____ False _____

14. The Granite School District Time-out Room Policy should be posted in the classroom, on or near the time-out room.

    True _____ False _____

15. If a student argues about the misbehavior on the way to the time-out room, the teacher should keep explaining in a calm manner why the student needs to go to time-out.

    True _____ False _____

Reprimands and Precision Requests

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Reprimands and Precision Requests

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ✔ The difference between a reprimand and a precision request.
- ✔ The variables that make reprimands and precision requests effective.
- ✔ How to issue a reprimand or precision request.
- ✔ How to solve specific problems that may arise in the use of reprimands or precision requests.

Introduction

Reprimands are the most common form of punishment used by teachers and parents. A reprimand is defined as a "gestural or verbal rebuke of a behavior." The majority of reprimands are used by persons in authority (i.e., parents and teachers) to stop or reduce a child's misbehavior. However, they can sometimes be used to increase a behavior (e.g., "Now get to work"). In addition, many reprimands carry the threat of a consequence if a student does not comply. However, most reprimands are generally made before an actual consequence is delivered. Reprimands are different from precision requests which will be discussed in detail later in this module.

The average elementary or junior high school teacher uses some type of verbal reprimand every two minutes (White, 1975), while high school teachers reprimand only about half as often. Interestingly, teacher reprimands exceed teacher praise in every grade after the second. Teachers also use significantly more reprimands with low ability students when compared to their rates with higher ability students (Heller & White, 1975). This means that students of lower ability or motivation may find school less and less rewarding the higher their grade level because they are reprimanded more and receive less praise.

A recent survey also indicates that teachers still prefer reprimands as their primary motivation and discipline technique (based on a survey of 1800 teachers reported in US Today in 1988).

Percentage of Teachers Often Using

	Elem. School	Middle/ Jr. High	High School	All Teachers
Oral reprimand	49.3%	43.6%	34.5%	41.9%
Call parent	27.1%	29.7%	14.0%	21.7%
Revoke privileges	27.5%	11.6%	9.9%	17.3%
Detemtion	7.2%	18.9%	9.8%	10.0%
Isolate from class	8.6%	5.6%	4.5%	6.1%
Send to principal	2.3%	1.1%	2.4%	2.0%
Corporal punishment	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%

Thus, reprimands are a fact of educational life that teachers will no doubt continue to use.

Are Reprimands Effective?

The answer to this question is "yes." Reprimands can be very effective if they are used properly. However, their effectiveness is temporary and only a short term solution. To make reprimands effective over the long term, they must not be over-used and should also be combined with other classroom management techniques (Van Houten & Doley, 1983).

Behavior

Reprimands can be effective in reducing disruptive behavior in a classroom. For example, in one study two disruptive 5th graders, John and Russell, were reprimanded by a teacher for their classroom misbehavior (Van Houten, Nau, MacKenzie-Keating, Sameoto, & Calavecchia, 1982). The boys were disruptive approximately 60 percent of the time in their mathematics class. When the teacher effectively reprimanded John, Russell's behavior immediately improved even though Russell's behavior was not reprimanded. Similarly, when Russell's behavior was reprimanded, John's behavior spontaneously improved. Clearly, classroom behavior can be improved temporarily when reprimands are used effectively.

Academics

Can reprimands improve academic motivation? This is a more difficult question. However, there is some evidence to show that effective reprimands can also improve academic skills. In the same study described above, an analysis was made of Russell and John's academic performance in their math class. Before the teacher used reprimands for classroom misbehavior, academic performance was poor. On average Russell completed about 15 percent of his assignments and John completed about 20 percent. When reprimands were used with John for his misbehavior, his academic production shot up to 60 percent. Interestingly, Russell's academic production also increased dramatically to 80 percent, even when the reprimands were not directed towards him. This is another example of the "spill-over effect" with the use of effective reprimands. The behavior and academic performance of students seated near the reprimanded student may improve.

However, it is important to point out that the reprimands used in this study were used effectively. That is, the teacher's positive reinforcement rate was high, and several other important variables were in place.

What Makes Reprimands Effective?

There are several variables that make reprimands effective. First, reprimands should not be over-used. Second, if a consequence is indicated, then it should be delivered. However, consequences should be pre-planned and reasonable. They should not be invented on the spot while a teacher is angry at the child's misbehavior (if this happens, teachers tend to be overly punitive). Third, a teacher should

keep track of the number of reprimands he/she delivers in comparison to the number of reinforcing statements. The rate of reinforcement should be at least twice as high as the number of reprimands. Fourth, a set of presentation variables are important in the effective delivery of reprimands. These variables include how a teacher actually gives a reprimand. Important factors are the distance from the student from which a reprimand is given, how much time a student is given to respond to a reprimand, how the teacher faces the student, the type of voice that a teacher uses, and the emotionality of the teacher. Each of these variables is discussed below.

- Format: Do not use a question or "Let's" format (e.g., "Isn't it time to do your work?"; or "Let's get to work"). Instead, use a standard request or reprimand (e.g., "It is time to do your work now" or "Please do your work").

The more a teacher randomly circulates in a classroom, the more effective his/her requests will be.

- Time: Wait approximately 3 to 5 seconds after you make the request for a student to start complying. Do not say anything to the student during this time; simply wait. The temptation is to re-issue the command (unnecessarily) or to issue a new command. Approximately 40 percent of the time, teachers unnecessarily interrupt during this 3 to 5 second period.

- Only Twice: State the reprimand or request only twice. If one reprimands or requests more than twice, the student becomes conditioned to repeated requests.

- Distance: Teacher proximity to the student should be approximately three feet. (The average teacher issues a reprimand from 20 feet.) Ineffective reprimands and requests are issued long distance.

- Circulate: The more a teacher randomly circulates in a classroom, the more effective his/her requests will be. Ineffective teachers stay glued to their desks.

- Eye Contact: Making eye contact with the student or asking him/her to look in your eyes will improve reprimand or request effectiveness. Poor teachers do not make eye contact and are often absorbed in other eye catching tasks (e.g., reading, writing on the board) when they make a reprimand or request.

- Touching: Softly touch a student's shoulder just before issuing a reprimand or request also helps to gain his/her attention. However, touching a secondary student or explosive student is not recommended.

- Firm Voice: A request or command should be issued in a firm voice. This does not mean a yelling, cajoling, pleading, or humoring voice.

- Soft Instead of Loud: It is better to issue a reprimand in a firm but soft voice at a three

foot distance than to give a loud reprimand. Loud reprimands are generally given at distances greater than three feet and distract other students.

- Nonemotional: It is always better to give a nonemotional reprimand than an emotionally loaded reprimand. Calling a student a name (e.g., "Why are you so lazy, now get to work."), making threats, or becoming angry are very ineffective.

- Proximal Request and Reinforcers: It sometimes helps to give requests to other students sitting near the unmotivated student before issuing a request to the difficult student. For example, issue a request to a normally compliant student, wait for the student to comply, socially reinforce the student, and then issue a request to the more problematic student. Similarly, it helps to socially comment spontaneously and reinforce students who are already complying who are working near the difficult student before issuing a request to the difficult student. A good rule to remember is that at least two positive social reinforcers should be given by the teacher to students who are complying before each reprimand or request to a noncomplying student.

- Momentum: It often helps to encourage an unmotivated student to respond by issuing positive and fun requests before issuing a more difficult request. In a sense, the teacher builds up a "momentum" of compliance before more difficult requests are made. For example, ask the unmotivated student to pass out the class worksheets before issuing a request to start working on the assignment. Or, students might be given directions for a pleasant activity or game before more challenging assignments are made. A common mistake made by many teachers is to review or try to review the previous day's difficulties first thing in the morning and then to request the student to work. This has the opposite effect of compliance momentum.

Specificity increases compliance.

- Description and Specificity: It is more effective to specifically describe the exact performance the teacher wants rather than to give global statements. For example, it is better to state, "Do the even math problems on page 38" instead of "Do your work that I told you to do." Specificity increases compliance.

- Positive Consequences: If a student complies with a request or reprimand, it is important to socially reinforce the student. It is a mistake to let sleeping dogs lie. Some teachers state, "He is following my directions now, and I do not want to interrupt him or he might stop." This is wrong for two reasons. First, the student is less likely to complete the task the teacher requested if he is not socially reinforced. Second, in the future the student is less likely to comply with the teacher's requests.

- Negative Consequences: Not all students comply, with the teacher's requests and sometimes a mild negative consequence is needed. For example, if a student does not comply, he/she might get a check on the board as a warning, lose his/her recess, or be given a brief time out period. Frequently, teachers threaten students and do not carry out the consequences. Do not threaten. Have pre-planned consequences ready for students and follow through with them every time students have earned them.

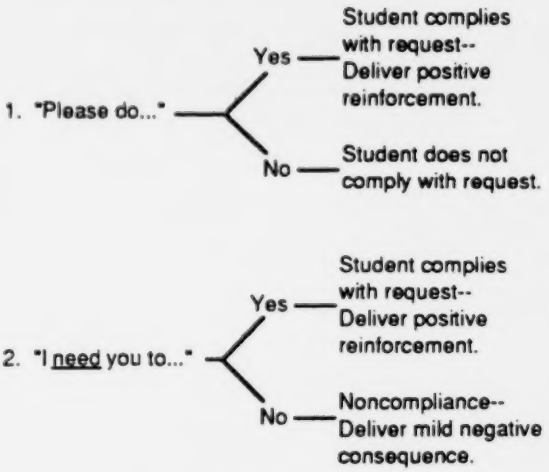
A precision request is a sure-fire recipe for student compliance.

Precision Requests

A precision request is a sure-fire recipe for student compliance. It can be used to prompt appropriate behaviors or stop inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. In addition to the steps described for effective reprimands, the following additional rules are specific to the use of precision requests:

1. If a second request is needed, use the key word, "need."
2. If the request is followed, use a social reinforcer (e.g., praise).
3. If the request is not followed, use a mild pre-planned negative consequence.
4. After the negative consequence has been delivered, return to Rule #3 and repeat request cycle again or until the student follows the request.

A diagram for using precision requests is depicted below:



3. After consequence--restate "I need you to . . ."

An important aspect of using a precision request is that the teacher has pre-planned, mild negative consequences. Effective negative consequences include the loss of a privilege such as free time, recess, or getting to eat lunch in the lunch room. Checks on the board are also a good system. For example, for the first occurrence of not working, the student's name and a check are placed on the board. For each additional check, the student loses 5 minutes of recess until the whole recess is gone. During recess, the student should make up the academic work.

Time out can be used with precision requests for very disruptive behaviors such a arguing, property destruction, or tantrums (e.g., "I need you to stop arguing with me"). If time out is used, it is important to restate the command "I need you to..." after the student leaves time out. If the student refuses, the teacher should re-implement the time out procedure.

However, time out is a poor consequence for academic motivation problems. Frequently, students would rather be in time out rather than doing their academic work. A good compromise is to have the student bring a favored toy or object from school. For each check on the board, the toy stays in time out (i.e., on the teacher's desk) and the student has to wait (while doing academics) during recess or free time for the toy to come out of time out.

Troubleshooting Precision Requests

Problem: Precision requests may have been effective initially, but then lost their effectiveness. This generally means that they have been over used, the teacher is not reinforcing enough when students follow requests, or that the teacher does not consistently deliver effective pre-planned consequences when students do not follow requests.

Problem: After implementing precision requests, the student's behavior becomes worse. This usually means that the student is using coercion with the teacher. In other words, the student becomes worse, hoping that the teacher will withdraw the request. The teacher must stand firm and follow through with the precision requests and the pre-planned consequences. If he/she does not, worse behavior on the student's part will have to be reinforced.

Problem: The student becomes physically aggressive when he/she is issued a precision request. This is the same as #2 above. The student is using coercion on the teacher in the form of physical force. The teacher must have a pre-planned consequence which may necessitate that student being removed from the room. However, it is important to remember that when the student returns the teacher must re-issue the "I need you to..." request. If he/she does not, the student will learn to escape or avoid a teacher's request by being removed from the classroom.

Problem: A student tries to be funny or humorous each time the teacher issues a precision request. This is another form of coercion, where the student is trying to escape or avoid the request. The teacher must not laugh or smile and must remain unemotional with a neutral look on his/her face. If the student does not comply within 5 seconds of the "I need you to...", then the teacher should implement the pre-planned consequences.

Problem: Many students will wait until the last second and then say "OK, I'll do it." By doing this, the student is trying to coerce the teacher into delaying the implementation of the pre-planned consequence. The teacher should implement the consequence, and when the consequence is over re-issue the "I need you to..." statement.

Problem: The student begins the requested behavior within 3 to 5 seconds after the precision request but then stops doing the work or does it too slowly (molasses in winter phenomena). The precision request may be stated as "I need you to do your math assignment in the next 30 minutes." It may help to set a kitchen timer. If the student is not finished within the specified time frame, the teacher should implement the consequence and re-issue the request with another time limit.

Problem: The student will respond to the "I need you to..." request, but will not respond to other simple requests made during the day the first time the teacher asks. The student may even get legalistic and say, "I don't have to do it because you didn't use the word need." The way to avoid this is to use the formal "I need you to..." request for a week for all initial requests. When the student is responding well, the teacher should inform him/her that sometimes he/she will use the word "need" and sometimes he/she will not. In either case, the pre-planned consequences will be used for not complying. The teacher should not negotiate or overly explain this point.

Problem: The student starts to use the "I need you to..." request with the teacher and expects him/her to respond. The student may say it is only fair for him/her to use the precision request with the teacher or other students because the teacher uses it with him/her. The teacher can let the student know the world is not fair and if he/she uses the precision request with the teacher, then he/she will automatically use the pre-planned consequence with him/her (e.g., name on the board). The teacher should not argue this point or succumb to the fairness argument.

Problem: The student does not respond and says he/she does not understand the "I need you to..." request. The teacher should explain the request sequence and pre-planned consequence once or twice—no more is needed. The teacher will, of course, make sure that the precision requests are specific and descriptive. If the student still has problems, then it is probably a ploy to get out of the request or consequence. The teacher should stay the course and implement the request sequence for about a week. If the student improves, the teacher should stick with the procedure. If there is no improvement in a week the teacher should check: (a) the way he/she gives the precision request, (b) his/her reinforcement rate, and (c) the potency of the pre-planned consequence. The teacher should explain the procedure again, increase the reinforcement rate for appropriate behavior (i.e., to at least one positive comment each 15 minutes), and change the pre-planned consequence (i.e., change a check on the board by the student's name for loss of recess time to a call home to the parent or a time out procedure).

Staying calm and knowing exactly what the next action will be is critically important to the success of this proceedure.

When precision requests are not working, check the following: (a) the teacher's positive reinforcement rate to the whole class, (b) the teacher's distance when making the request, (c) eye contact with the student, (d) the teacher's circulating in the classroom, (e) the loudness and emotionality of the teacher's voice, (f) whether the student is given enough time (3-5 seconds) to respond to the request, and (g) consistent follow through with pre-planned consequences.

Cautions

The biggest problem with the use of precision requests or effective reprimands is when a teacher becomes emotionally excited and does not

have preplanned, negative consequences in place. If this happens, teachers tend to punish too harshly or implement very unrealistic consequences (e.g., "You are grounded for the rest of the month.") Staying calm and knowing exactly what the next action will be is critically important to the success of this procedure.

Case Study—Precision Requests

Jeffery is an eight year old in the third grade. He has had constant problems with staying on task and finishing his work, particularly his math sheets. In addition, Jeffery bothers other children and brings their work rates down. Nothing seems to reward Jeffery for staying on task and finishing his work. He would rather daydream and clown around with the other children that sit near him.

His teacher decided to try a series of simple precision requests to try and improve Jeffery's academics and problem behavior with other children. First, the teacher targeted the 30 minutes of in-seat math work on which to implement the precision requests. During this time she increased her positive comments to Jeffery and the boys sitting near him for doing their work. In addition, the teacher made sure she circulated around the classroom during the math period instead of trying to do work at her desk. Initially, this had a positive effect, but within a week Jeffery was up to his old behaviors.

The second step was to implement the precision request intervention. The teacher stated that off task students would be requested to work with the "I need you to...." request. If they continued to not work, their name would be placed on the board with a check beside it. For each check, the student would miss 5 minutes of their recess and have to stay in and do additional academic math work. If there were no names on the board for the whole class, the whole class could have an additional 5 minutes of recess. The teacher explained the procedure twice. When Jeffery tried to argue, she simply stated that there could be no negotiations.

During the first day of the precision request condition, things went well. There were no names on the board, and the whole class got an additional five minutes of recess. However, on the second day Jeffery strayed off task and started talking with a neighbor. Immediately, the teacher went up to Jeffery (i.e., three feet away), touched his shoulder, made eye contact, and stated, "Class please do your math". This had a positive effect on Jeffery and all the boys near him. However, Jeffery soon was off task again, and the teacher now said, "Class now I need you to work". Again, he began to work; however, he soon went off task again. He also walked up to the pencil sharpener without permission. Immediately, the teacher put his name on the board with a check. Jeffery, stated out loud that this was unfair; since he was starting to work but needed his pencil sharpened. The teacher without comment put another check by his name and then walked over and looked him in the eye. Instead of arguing, Jeffery got to work. However, a boy near by snickered. The teacher calmly walked up to the board and put this boy's name on the board with a check and then walked over near him. After every one was working for five minutes, the teacher picked a student near Jeffery and praised him for working well. Then after a brief time, the teacher made the same comment about Jeffery.

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EXHIBIT 9.7 - Ten variables that affect compliance

1. ***Using a Question Format*** - The use of questions instead of direct requests reduces compliance. For example, "Would you please stop teasing?" is less effective than "I need you to stop teasing."

2. ***Distance*** - It is better to make a request from up close (i.e., 1 meter, one desk distance) than from longer distances (i.e., 7 meters, across the classroom).

3. ***Eye Contact*** - It is better to look into the child's eyes or ask the child to look into your eyes than to not make eye contact.

4. ***Two Requests*** - It is better to give the same request only twice than to give it serveral times (i.e., nag). Do not give many different requests rapidly (i.e., "Please give me your homework, behave today, and do not tease the girl in front of you.")

5. ***Loudness of Request*** - It is better to make a request in a soft but firm voice than a loud voice, i.e., yelling when making a request to get attention).

6. ***Time*** - Give the student time to comply after giving a request (3 to 5 seconds). During this short interval, do not converse with the child (agruing, excuse making), restate the request, or make a different request. Simply look the child in the eyes and wait for compliance.

7. ***More Start Requests Instead of Stop Requests*** - It is better to make more positive requests for a child to start an appropriate behavior (e.g., "Please start your arithmetic assignment.")

8. ***Nonemotional Instead of Emotional Requests*** - It is better to control negative emotions when making a request (e.g., yelling, name calling, guilt-inducing statements, and roughly handling a child.) Emotional responses decrease compliance and make the situation worse.

9. ***Descriptive Requests*** - Requests that are positive and descriptive are better than ambiguous or global requests (i.e., "Please sit in your chair, with your feet on the floor, hands on your desk, and look at me" is better than "Pay attention.")

10. ***Reinforce Compliance*** - It is too easy to request a behavior from a child and then ignore the positive result. If you want more compliance, genuinely reinforce it.

Self-Recording to Enhance Performance

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Self-Recording to Enhance Performance

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ✔ The definition of self-recording.
- ✔ The different ways in which behavior can be self-recorded.
- ✔ How to increase the effectiveness of self-recording as an intervention technique.
- ✔ How to implement a self-recording problem.
- ✔ How to solve specific problems that may arise in the use of reprimands or precision requests.

Introduction

To keep careful track of ourselves on a daily basis, we self-record our behavior. For example, many of us collect data about our weight first thing in the morning. Other people collect data on how many miles they jog, while others record how much money they have spent in their checking account . Simply stated, self-recording is the systematic collection of data on oneself. However, self-recording is more than just casually observing one's own behavior. It actually involves: (1) systematic observation of the behavior, and (2) recording the behavior with some type of device (e.g., pencil and paper, golf counter).

This definition emphasizes systematic and recording. What we mean by systematic is that a specific behavior is defined and recorded over a predetermined period of time. For example, a behavior we want to record may be on-task classroom behavior which is defined as "keeping one's eyes focused on either appropriate work materials or a teacher who is giving instructions." The manner in which the behavior is recorded– either frequency, duration, or latency–is important to define. Frequency involves counting the number of appropriate classroom student comments made. Duration includes how long a child works independently and appropriately. Latency might be the amount of time it takes a child to gather work materials and to get started working.

The amount of time over which the data are collected is important to specify. For example, a student might record during a single academic period or the whole day. If we do not know the amount of time involved, it would be difficult to determine what the data mean. For example, if a child self-recorded 5 talk outs, does that mean 5 per hour, 5 per day, or 5 in the whole week? The time period is critical in making judgements and comparisons.

Some type of recording instrument is also needed for students to self-record. The most simple types of instruments generally include pencil and paper. Each time the behavior occurs, the child simply makes a mark on the paper. For duration and latency, some type of timing device is needed. A stop watch, kitchen timer, or wrist watch can be used to record the length of a behavior. More exotic instruments include such devices as golf counters, pedometers (i.e., to collect data on movement), knitting counters (for counting), bracelets with beads that can be slid over a thread (like the beads on an abacus), or even videotapes of behavior. All self-recording involves some type of instrument to be used in collecting the data.

Self-recording is important for two reasons. First, it offers assessment data on which to base decisions. However, what is more important is that self-recording actually changes behavior.

Why self-record? Self-recording is important for two reasons. First, it offers assessment data on which to base decisions. However, what is more important is that self-recording actually changes behavior. If someone stares at us, we usually temporarily stop what we are doing and wonder abouttheir attention. This phenomena is called reactivity. In a sense, we react to the observer and change our behavior. This same reactive effect happens when we observe our own behavior, particularly if the behavior is an unconscious habit. By collecting data on ourselves, our unconscious pattern of behavior is interrupted and our behavior is temporarily changed. That is, when we get accustomed to collecting data on ourselves, we frequently revert back to old habits. A habit is temporarily broken when a smoker wraps his cigarettes in a piece of paper which is bound by a rubber band. Each time he reaches for a cigarette, he has to unwrap the pack of cigarettes and write (self-record) on the paper that a cigarette was taken. This procedure will usually reduce smoking, at least temporarily. In fact, the smoker will be surprised when he unconsciously reaches for the pack of cigarettes and finds it wrapped. This is what is meant by reactivity.

Reactivity actually changes the behavior that we are self-recording. It provides a window of opportunity to change a behavior that may be difficult to change through contingencies such as rewards and aversive consequences. If a student constantly daydreams, talks outs, or impulsively disturbs other students, it may be difficult for him to change his behavior because it is such an ingrained habit. However, if he self-records his inappropriate behavior, then the behavior may be decreased enough for the contingencies to work. For example, Jenson, Paoletti, and Petersen (1984) report a case in which a boy had a chronic throat clearing habit in class. In fact, the boy actually cleared his throat on average 400 times per school day. This high rate of throat clearing was disturbing to the whole class.

When the researchers tried to apply a simple contingency of giving the boy points for reducing his throat clearing to 50 per day or taking away points if they went above 50, his throat clearing actually worsened and increased to approximately 450 per day. The point contingency actually made throat clearing worse. Then the researchers removed the point contingency and gave the boy a golf counter and asked him to record each time he cleared his throat. The first day it fell below 50 throat clears and slowly decreased. Then the researchers re-implemented the point contingency and the throat clearing decreased to zero. In a sense, the self-recording, by temporarily reducing the throat clearings, gave the more permanent point contingency a chance to work.

When self-recording is used with unmotivated students, it is important to maximize the reactive effects of the procedure. The following variables have been shown to increase reactivity and the behavior change effects of self-recording (Haynes, 1978).

1. Obtrusiveness: The more obtrusive the recording method, then the more reactive are the self-recording procedures. Obtrusiveness means "different" to the point of "standing out". For example, a golf counter is more reactive than simply writing on a piece of paper. Or, recording on a blackboard is more obtrusive than recording on a small piece of paper taped on a desk.

2. Behavior or Behavior-product: It is actually better to self-record the actual occurrence of a behavior than the by-product of a behavior. For example, self-recording the number of problems actually completed is better than self-recording the grade on the math worksheet. Similarly, it is better to record the number of calories consumed at each meal than to record your weight in the morning.

3. Prior or Following the Behavior: In some instances, it may be better to self-record the behavior just before it is about to occur than to wait until it has occurred. For instance, it would be better to record each math problem just before it is attempted than to wait until after it is attempted. Again with the eating example, you will lose more weight if you self-record just prior to taking a bite than to wait until after you have taken a bite.

The closer the self-recording is to the actual behavior (i.e., either immediately before or after), the more effective the procedure.

4. Occurrence and Nonoccurrence: It is better to record actual occurrences of a behavior than nonoccurrences. For example, Gottman and McFall (1972) found that the largest increases in participation in a class of unmotivated high school dropouts happened when they had them monitor the actual frequencies of their comments. A smaller increase was obtained when the high school students monitored the frequency of times they actually wanted to make a comment but did not.

5. Immediate Recording vs Delayed Recording: The closer the self-recording is to the actual behavior (i.e., either immediately before or after), the more effective the procedure. It is better when the child immediately records the behavior than waiting to record. For example, it is better when the child self-records immediately after making an inappropriate comment in the class, than waiting until the end of

the period to mark the talk outs. Some teachers think that having a child record during the middle of a lesson will be disruptive. However, research shows improvements in behaviors if self-recording occurs immediately.

6. Positive and Negative Peer Social Contingencies: Self-recording can backfire and makes things worse in some situations. For example, self-recording inappropriate behaviors generally results in a temporary reduction and self-recording appropriate behavior usually leads to a temporary increase. However, if a child is socially reinforced by his or her peers for inappropriate behavior, then self-recording those behaviors can actually cause an increase in them. Similarly, if students are punished for appropriate behaviors by their peers, then they may actually decrease. Teachers should be aware of subtle peer reinforcement and, if it occurs, they should use a reinforcement contingency for the child or group.

7. Contingencies: The types of contingencies that teachers use are either positive rewards or mild aversives. Contingencies make the temporary effects of self-recording more permanent. As discussed above, self-recording often gives the teacher a chance to "get a foot" in the door, and then to follow with a contingency. If contingencies (i.e., reinforcement and/or aversives) have failed when used alone, it is often wise to stop the contingency and then implement a self-recording procedure. When the self-recording produces positive results, then the contingency can be slowly added back to make the effects more permanent.

Contingencies also work with self-recording if the resultant behavior is in the opposite direction of what the teacher expected and inappropriate peer social reinforcement is suspected (i.e., inappropriate behavior increases and/or appropriate behavior decreases). A contingency can be added for the whole group, if the number of self-recorded behaviors reaches a predetermined desired level. For example, the group will receive 10 minutes extra recess if Jeffery and Jamie's talk-outs are below three for the morning. Hendersen used self-recording with a group contingency to increase both on-task behavior and academic productivity. With this procedure, a random "beep" was played by a cassette tape recorder in the classroom. Each row of the classroom formed a group, and one student recorded the on-task behavior of the whole row. When the beep sounded, if a child was off-task on the row, the teacher indicated that all the children on that row would not receive points, and no points were marked by the one the child on that row with the point card. If all the children were on-task when the beep sounded, the child marked the point card which all the children received at the end of the period.

It's an old joke "How many psychologists does it take to change a person's behavior? Only one, but the person has to really want to change." This is also true for self-recording.

Wanting To Improve

It's an old joke "How many psychologists does it take to change a person's behavior? Only one, but the person has to really want to change." This is also true for self-recording. The procedure is much more effective for students who want to change but have difficulty because of bad habits or poor motivation. If

a child expresses an interest in changing, self-recording can be very successful. However, it will also work on children who are less interested in changing, particularly if a positive motivation contingency is also used.

Goal Setting

The effects of self-recording can be enhanced if a predetermined goal is posted for the child. For example, a goal of 15 correct arithmetic problems for each child in a class can be posted on the blackboard. The children then self-record each problem they attempt on a self-recording sheet during their arithmetic time. Simply having the goal posted and having each child check their problems off as they are done will generally help to increase the productivity of the group.

Problems Completed
GOAL = 15 PROBLEMS
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 Finished

Self-Matching

The self-matching procedure is one of the most effective self-recording procedures designed to change difficult classroom behaviors. With self-matching, a child records data on his or her own behavior. However, the teacher also randomly keeps track of one or two children in class, who are unaware that they are being monitored by the teacher. At the end of the day, the teacher announces which children were being monitored. The children are then asked to compare their ratings with the teacher's ratings. If there is a perfect match (between the child and teacher), the child receives a reward such as reinforcement points plus a bonus, if there is a 90% match all the children just receive the points; if the match is less than 90%, the children lose points.

This procedure was used in a study by Rhode, Morgan, and Young (1981) to improve the behavior of behaviorally disordered children in a resource room and then in the regular classroom. The children's behavior and work was monitored for four periods each day and then matched with the teacher's ratings. The improvements in behavior and academics were dramatic. The basic advantage of self-matching is that it sensitizes a child to the teacher's perception and evaluation of their behavior.

Does Self-Recording Improve Academics?

To this point, we have only discussed the use of self-recording in changing classroom or social behavior. However, it can also be a powerful tool in changing basic academic skills. Several studies used self-recording with elementary age through high school students to improve academic skills such as handwriting writing, completion of assignments, neat papers, arithmetic problems completed, history lessons, reading responses and others (Andersen-Inman, Paine, & Deutchman, 1984; Ballard & Glynn, 1975; Holman & Bear, 1979; Knapczyk & Livingston, 1973; Piersel, 1985; Broden, Hall, & Mitts, 1971).

A particularly interesting application of self-recording was with an 8th grade girl junior high school girl, Liz, who expressed an interest in getting a better grade in history (Broden et al., 1971). She was doing poorly in history (D- grade), and approached the school counselor for help. The counselor scheduled weekly meetings to talk over her problem, but talking had little effect on behavior in the classroom. Liz continued to fail and was off-task frequently and did not listen to the teacher's history

lesson or instructions. The counselor then set up a self-recording program for Liz using the card below. She was told to record a "+" in a square when she had been studying and a "-" when she was not studying. No set time interval for recording for marking the card was used in the history class. Liz was simply told to record her study behavior "when she thought of it".

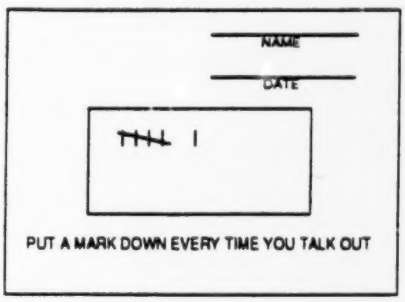
The self-recording procedure improved Liz's classroom study behavior. Her study behavior jumped from 30% to approximately 80% of the time using the card. It is also interesting to note that when Liz increased her study behavior using the self-recording card the history teacher started to spontaneously pay more positive attention to her. This is a natural positive contingency which helped make Liz's change a permanent change. In fact, Liz passed this history course with a C.

Does Self-Recording Change Behaviors that Interfere with Academics?

Again the answer is, "Yes". Self-recording has been used to reduce several classroom disruptive behaviors that interfere with academic success. For example, self-recording has been used with

Self-recording has been used to reduce several classroom disruptive behaviors that interfere with academic success.

classroom talk-outs, off-task, and out of seat behavior (Broden et al., 1971; Sugi & Rowe, 1984; Rooney, Hallahan, & Lloyd, 1984; McLaughlin; 1984). In the same paper as discussed above, Broden et al. (1971) tried self-monitoring with another child who had a talk-out problem. Stu ("the motor mouth") was an eighth grade boy who had a high rate of inappropriately talking out in his math class and disturbing others. Stu's talk-out rate was split into two sections, A and B. In section A, his talk-out rate was 1.1 per minute and in section B it was 1.6 per minute. This is an extremely high rate. A slip of paper was given to Stu and he was told to record his talk-outs in the math class. Talk-outs dropped to .3 per minute in section A and .5 per minute for section B. When Stu was not given the slips to record, the behavior immediately worsened.



It is interesting to note that Stu was not particularly interested in using the self-recording procedure. Even though he was not motivated, the procedure had a substantial positive impact on his behavior. To make the change permanent, a teacher should implement a program of praise for his reduction in talk-outs and possibly some type of reward contingency.

How To Set Up A Self-Recording Program In a Classroom

There are several questions that a teacher should answer before using a self-recording program. First, is the program needed or can the child simply

change behavior if asked? Second, does the behavior seem like a habit or is it impulsive? If a habit, then the procedure will probably work. Third, what kind of recording instrument is needed? A pencil and paper system is probably best for most classrooms. Fourth, is there peer encouragement for misbehavior. If so, a contingency may be needed for the whole classroom.

There are just a few materials a teacher needs to implement a self-recording procedure. A teacher will need a recording device such as a pencil and paper, golf counter, knitting counter. Some type of simple form is also needed that defines the target behavior and includes space to record the data. This paper includes several forms that can be copied and used. A teacher, trying to improve on-task behavior, might also need some type of random signalling device. These devices can be kitchen timers or a cassette player with a tape that contains random beeps or numbers.

Step 1: Talk about the procedure with the child and solicit his or her help. This may enhance the motivation of the child which will make the self-recording procedure work better.

Step 2: Specifically define the behavior so you and the child understand what you want. For example, "talk-outs are saying something in class without the teacher's permission." Or, "correct math problems, are each attempted math problem that is checked."

Step 3: Discuss the recording instrument. If it is a pencil and paper method, then it is best for the teacher to supply the instrument.

Name: _____
Date: _____
Behavior: _____

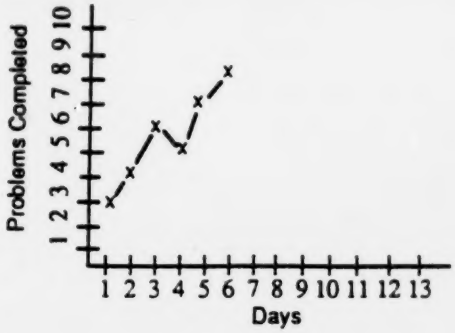
1	2	3	4	5

Step 4: Define the time over which you want the recordings to occur (e.g., an academic period or the whole day).

Step 5: Decide if there appears to be peer support for inappropriate behavior. Do other children encourage the child to talk-out or be off-task? If they do, then implement a group contingency for the whole class or the most troublesome children.

Step 6: Check on the validity of the child's self-recording. For example, the number of correct math problems could be checked or a teacher can also keep her own tally of the inappropriate talk-outs made by the child. If a child is obviously in error or cheating, then a teacher can prompt the child when the behavior occurs and it should be self-recorded. Or, the teacher can implement a self-matching program.

Step 7: Have some type of graph or data collection system that you can use to decide if the child is improving. However, a simple graph with days on the bottom and the target behavior on the left side is all that is needed. See the example below:



Step 8: Decide if some type of additional reward and/or mild aversive contingency is needed to produce a permanent change in the behavior. Remember, the contingency does not have to be elaborate. Something as simple as increased teacher praise for the appropriate behavior or reviewing the progress with the child is sometimes all that is needed. In more difficult cases, a simple contract or periodic reward can be used (e.g., if you improve your study time by keeping your off-tasks to below 5 in the reading period, then you can have five minutes of free time).

Cautions

There are few cautions related to self-recording if teachers are careful about designing and implementing the program. First, teachers should be sensitive to the reaction of other children in the classroom. For example, the self-recording child should not stand out or be the butt of student comments. It is also important to make sure that the child can actually perform the required target behavior that is being self-recorded. If the child can not perform the behavior, he may get frustrated and act out. The ability to use the self-recording procedure is also important. The child must be capable of using a pencil or understanding what is expected and how it should be rated or self-recorded.

Troubleshooting a Self-Recording Program

1. The self-recording program was working, and then it died. This is a common problem. It generally means that the child has become accustomed to the self-recording program and, therefore, it is no longer reactive. There are two possible solutions. First, change the self-recording instrument and make the new instrument more obtrusive. For example, if the child was using a pencil and paper to self-record, change it to a golf counter or some other instrument. Second, try a reward contingency if the child stops responding. Remember the effects of self-recording are temporary unless they are consistently rewarded or praised. The best solution may a combination of both suggestions.

2. The inappropriate behavior is increasing rather than decreasing. The first thing to check is peer reinforcement for the misbehavior (i.e., smiles, snickers, looks of congratulation, looks of approval, notes being passed after misbehavior, gestures such as thumbs-up). In a sense, self-recording is actually making the child more skilled at misbehaving so he can be reinforced by his peers. The solution is to continue the self-recording, but make improvements in the child's appropriate behavior a group contingency (i.e., the whole group earns a reward or loses something dependent on the self-recorded behavior).

3. The inappropriate behavior is increasing rather than decreasing, and there is no evidence of peer reinforcement for the misbehavior. In this case, the child probably did not want to change his or her behavior and self-recording has made things worse. In addition, the behavior that is being self-recorded is

probably important to the child in obtaining some type of reinforcement from the environment. The best thing to do is to continue the self-recording, but put a contingency into effect so that if the child improves, a small reinforcer can be earned. It is also important to have the teacher increase his or her praise for appropriate behavior. Frequently, the inappropriate behavior that is being self-recorded served the purpose of getting the teacher's negative attention. Even though the attention would appear negative to most people, it probably served as a reinforcer for the child's inappropriate behavior.

4. The target behavior has stayed the same but other misbehaviors have increased. This is an interesting situation. If the target behavior to be self-recorded stays the same, but other misbehaviors increase, then there is a good chance that the child is incapable of performing the target behavior. This is often true with academic behaviors or behaviors that require performance in front of a group (e.g., math problems, writing assignments, making appropriate verbal comments about a classroom topic, or speaking in front of class). The increase in other inappropriate behaviors is probably the result of frustration at not being able to perform the required target behavior. The only thing to do in this situation is to give the child additional instruction in the required academic task with generous praise and little punishment. For performance problems, such as speaking in front of class or making appropriate verbal comments, it is best to have the child practice the response with the teacher in a safe situation (i.e., alone with the teacher). Videotapes of the child performing the correct response can often help. It may also require a "student confederate" to praise the child when they make a comment or presentation (e.g., "Good remark", "I wish I had thought of that", "Nice going").

5. The child wants to self-record but does not have the ability to keep track of either the target behaviors to be recorded or does not seem to understand the recording procedure. The key to this is to simplify the target behaviors and the recording procedures. Countoons can help. These are cartoons of the actual behaviors that you want the child to self-record. Countoons can be designed for (1) independent seat work, (2) getting work done on time, and (3) raising hand to make a comment. All of these countoons would be rated on a simple 1 to 3 scale (i.e., 1 = poor, 2 = OK, 3= good).

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STUDY RECORD

Name:_____

Date:_____

Subject:_____

Mark a + for studying

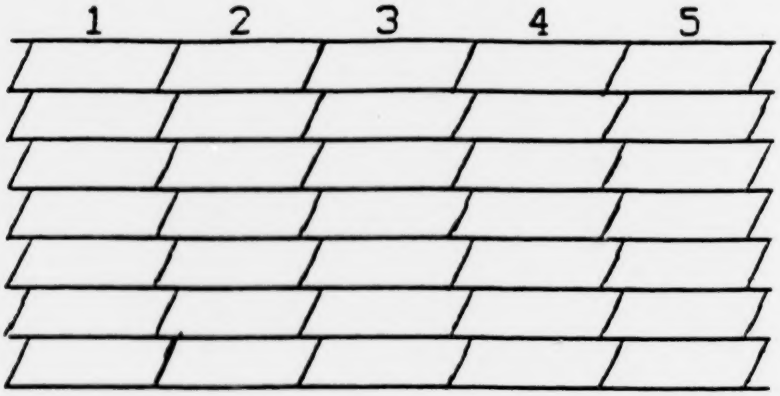
Mark a - for no studying

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Name: _____

Date: _____ _____

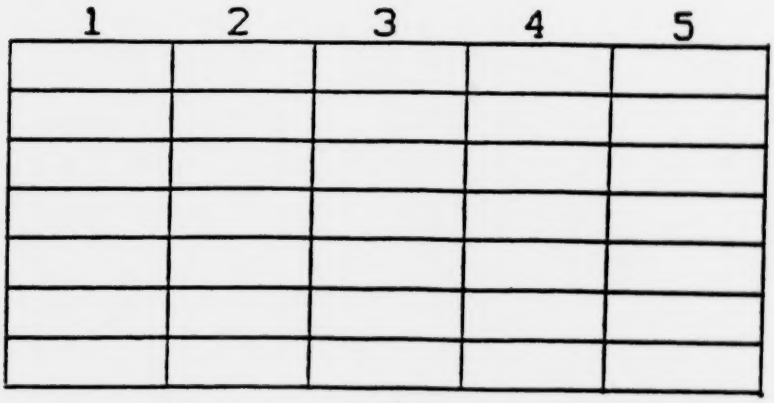
Behavior: _____



Name: _____

Date: _____

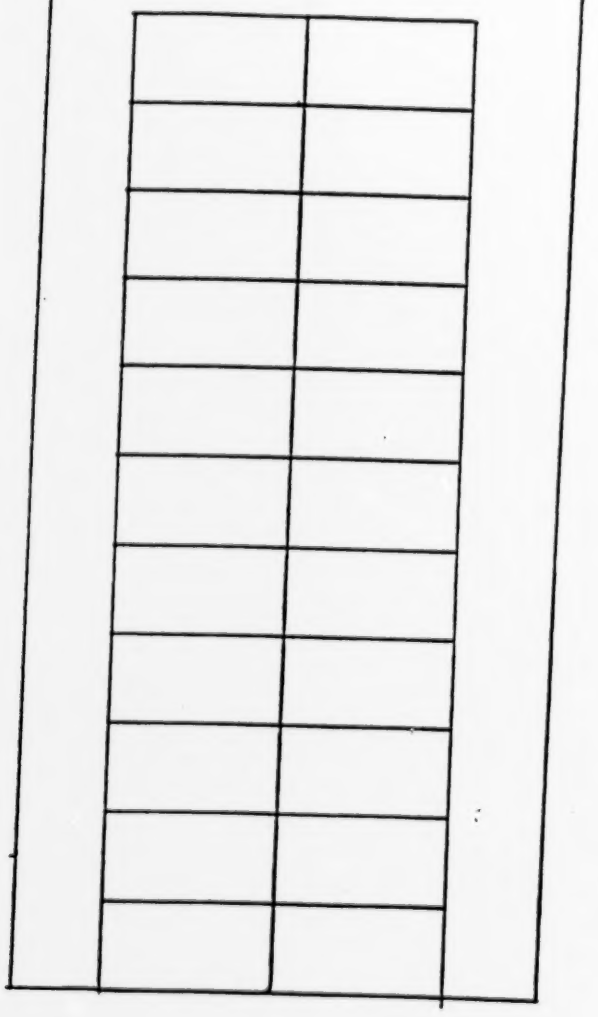
Behavior: _____



Name: _____

Date: _____

BEHAVIORS



Name: _____

Date: _____

BEHAVIORS

TALKING	NO TALKING

Name: _____

Date: _____

BEHAVIORS

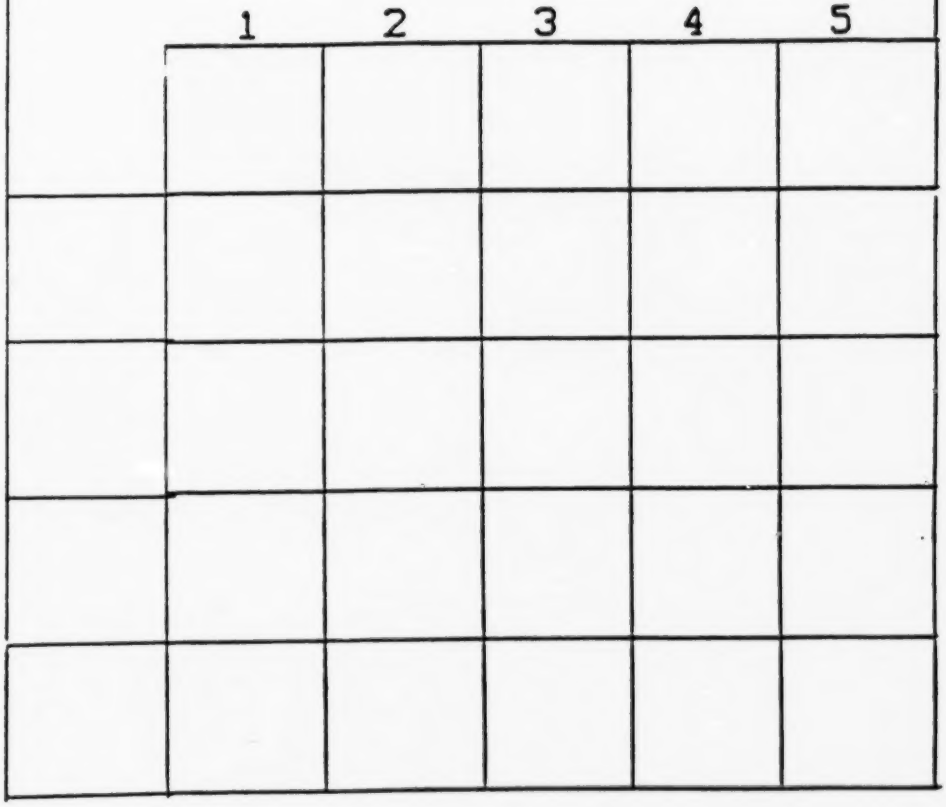
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

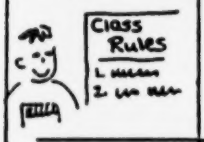
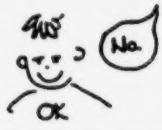


Self-recording Note for Countoons-Cut pictures and tape them in

Name: _____

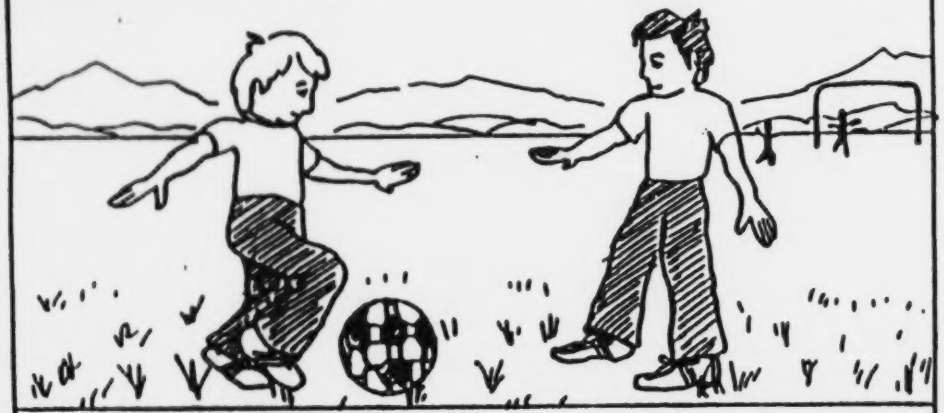
Date: _____

Working Independently
Finishing My Work
Raising My Hand To Ask
Following Classroom Rules
Accepting No For an Answer

	1	2	3	4	5
					
					

SELF-EVALUATION CARD

NAME _____ DATE _____



	POOR					GREAT !!	
PERIOD 1							
BEHAVIOR	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	BONUS ☆☆
WORK	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	_____
PERIOD 2							
BEHAVIOR	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	BONUS ☆
WORK	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	_____
PERIOD 3							
BEHAVIOR	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	BONUS ☆☆
WORK	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	_____
PERIOD 4							
BEHAVIOR	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	BONUS ☆☆
WORK	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤	_____

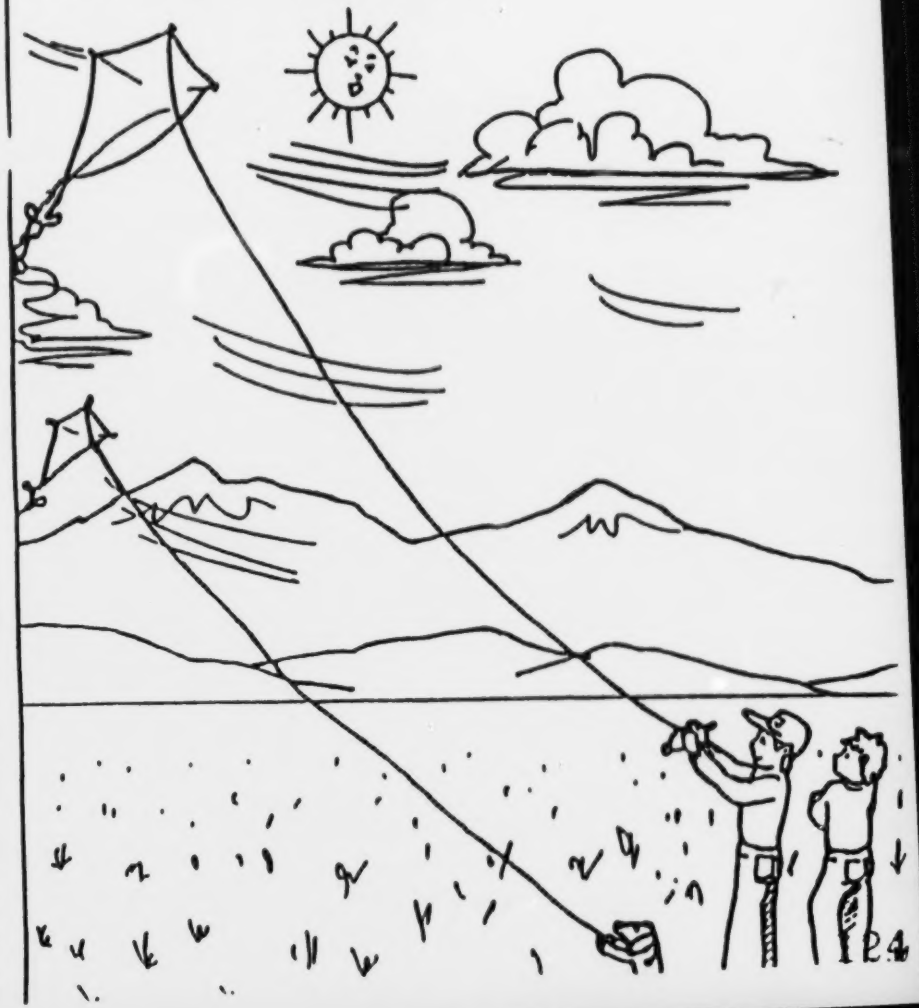
TOTAL FOR DAY _____

123

Evaluation every _____ minutes

CLASSROOM RULES

1. Sit in your seat unless you have permission to leave it.
2. Do what your teacher asks promptly.
3. Unless you have permission to speak, talk only about your work.
4. Work when you are supposed to.
5. Do not bother or hurt others.



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Countoons From the Children's Behavior Therapy Unit's Generalization Project
Drawings by Mrs. Melanie Neville

Cut and Paste Icons for Older Students

Icons correspond to numbered items from the Importance of Classroom Behavior Checklist (enclosed)

Teacher Praise

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Teacher Praise

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ✔ Advantages of using teacher praise.
- ✔ What makes teacher praise effective.
- ✔ Steps to enhance the effectiveness of praise.
- ✔ Why/how to monitor student target behaviors when using praise as an intervention.

Introduction

Throughout our society, one of the most common forms of positive reinforcement is praise. Teachers who make effective use of praise improve classroom atmosphere and reduce behavior disruptions so that all students benefit from a positive educational experience.

Praise is any verbal or non-verbal action by the teacher that indicates approval of or satisfaction with an individual student's behavior or with a group of students' behavior. Examples are phrases such as "That's good working," "I appreciate your time-on-task," and "You must feel proud of yourself for your effort," and so forth.

O'Leary and O'Leary (1977) concluded that, "Teacher attention is perhaps the most basic of all influences on student behavior, and the systematic use of attention should characterize every teacher's classroom repertoire (p. 55)." Wyatt and Hawkins (1987) and Vasta (1981) report that it has become commonplace to teach prospective teachers about the importance of contingent approval. Unfortunately, training them to actually use it appears to be unusual. Because it can be so effective, it is important for teachers to learn how to use praise to their advantage in their classrooms.

A number of researchers have found the use of teacher praise and attention to be helpful in improving time-on-task, study skills, and academic grades while also reducing behaivoral disruptions. Shute and Hopkins (1970) increased following instructions, while Witmer, Bornstein, and Dunham (1971) and Madsen, Becker, and Thomas (1968) showed how teacher praise could be used to decrease inappropriate behavior when teachers had been taught to use their praise contingently. Thomas, Becker, and Armstrong (1968) report that the actual rates of teacher approval are

very low despite the effectiveness of this procedure. This is supported by White (1975) who indicated a continual decrease in frequency of teacher praise with each successive grade level. White (1975) also reported that this appears to at least partially explain why students seem to experience the "disenchantment" or "loss of sense of joy in school" that she said knowledgeable observers report to occur after the 1st grade.

What Makes Praise Effective?

A nice feature about teacher praise is that it does not take a lot of training, complex materials, forms, or data collection prowess. In fact, of all the interventions available for classroom use by a teacher, praise is probably the least cumbersome of all.

A basic requirement, however, is that the teacher be willing to leave his/her desk or worktable and move around the classroom so that he/she is in a position to be able to praise appropriate behavior and academic efforts as they naturally occur. White (1975) reported that "classrooms that demonstrated a high level of praise indicated a high level of time-on-task." The converse was also true; teachers who used little praise, or used more disapproval, had a lower percentage of time-on-task for the class as a whole.

> ***"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."***

A short refresher course on the basics of positive reinforcement may be in order for a teacher to effectively implement praise strategies. Understanding the principles underlying the use of positive reinforcement is conducive to rewarding appropriate behavior at appropriate times. The use of praise, a social reinforcer, is probably one of the most important reinforcers for any human being. A smile, a comment about a good job or a good effort, and an expression of appreciation for a person's willingness to try are all examples of social reinforcers. Many students with disabilities who are off-task or annoying are socially unskilled and do not set themselves up for very many opportunities to be socially reinforced. Usually, these students are starving for appropriate recognition from their teachers. It is unfortunate that many teachers working with socially unskilled students under-utilize the use of praise. One reason for this is that many students who are candidates for praise do not often demonstrate behavior for which teachers feel they can deliver genuine praise.

Remember, though, that "*if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.*" Therefore, trying something different with these students is probably to their benefit as well as to the teacher's. In the long run, students who profit most from this type of intervention usually use up more teacher time to deal with their inappropriate and off-task behavior than it would take for the teacher to consciously and systematically use effective praise for their appropriate behavior.

Steps For Implementing Praise

The I-Feed-V rules apply when delivering praise. These rules are as follows:

- *"I" stands for "immediately."* The more immediately the praise is delivered, the more effective it will be. The teacher must also remember that the younger the student the more immediate the praise must be to be effective.

- *"F" stands for "frequently"* reinforcing the student. This is extremenly important when trying to shape or develop a new behavior. Appropriate behaviors are shaped much more quickly with frequent praise than with less frequent intermittent praise. The most common mistake made by a teacher is giving too few praise statements. The standard rule is *twenty four-six.* This means that the teacher should deliver at least twenty four reinforcers or praise statements across six hours of school time. This would work out to be approximately one reinforcer every fifteen minutes.

- *The first "E" stands for "enthusiasm."* A positive verbalization associated with what a student is doing appropriately also has to be perceived as sincere to be effective. Monotonic verbalizations of, "Good job," soon lose their effectiveness. A student must genuinely feel that the teacher approves and is pleased with the effort that is being made.

Many at-risk students will perform better when they receive enthusiastic praise for developing and demonstrating appropriate behaviors.

A number of teachers feel that appropriate behaviors should just be demonstrated by students on their own. For the most part, they will be. However, many at-risk students will perform better when they receive enthusiastic praise for developing and demonstrating appropriate behaviors.

- *The second "E" stands for "eye contact."* It is very important for the teacher to look the student in the eye when delivering praise. For this reason, proximity to the student is important so that good eye contact can be maintained. Obviously, it is somewhat more difficult to maintain good eye contact from across the room. In either case it is helpful to call the student by name to prompt him or her to look at the teacher before delivering the praise statement.

Praise that is not varied and maintained with enthusiasm will become tiresome, boring, and rapidly lose its effectiveness.

- *"D" stands for "describe" the behavior.* It is necessary to specifically describe the behavior that is being praised. Otherwise, students may not know why they are being praised or may think they are being praised for something they are not. Describing the desired behavior also helps students to self-monitor their own behavior in the future. An example of this is, "Billy, I sure like the way you stayed in your seat for the last 5 minutes." Another important point is that by describing the behavior, the teacher lets other students in the class know what is desired.

- *"V" stands for "variety."* This is an important concept since students will quickly tire of the same old comments such as, "Good job," "I like that," "Very nice." Praise that is not varied and maintained with enthusiasm will become tiresome, boring, and rapidly lose its effectiveness. One must be creativein administering praise.

Monitoring student progress using praise is a must and is relatively simple. A tally sheet kept on a note tablet can give an indication to the teacher as to whether or not a student is decreasing out-of-seat behaviors or increasing completion of assignments. Comparing grades before and

after the implementation is another way of monitoring the effectiveness of the intervention on academics. A student who has consistently failed assignments in the past and who begins to earn passing grades is obviously making progress.

Data on student behaviors while using praise is necessary in order for the teacher to evaluate progress and make appropriate decisions regarding what to do next. If adequate progress has been made, and target behaviors are maintained at appropriate levels, the teacher will want to begin to systematically fade the praise to a lower, more manageable level. Once the effectiveness of using praise has been shown with a particular student, it can be utilized in other areas throughout the day to increase appropriate academic and behavioral performances.

Data on student behaviors while using praise is necessary in order for the teacher to evaluate progress and make appropriate decisions regarding what to do next.

Another variation of using praise effectively is to pair it with disapproval or mild reprimands. The following rules should be followed when using reprimands in conjunction with praise:

(a) Reprimands should only be used when the reinforcement rate from the teacher and classroom personnel exceeds the reprimand rate. This means that the number of praise statements should exceed the number of reprimands. A current rule of thumb is about 4 to 1. For every one reprimand, there should be four praise statements. If the ratio is too low, the teacher must look for and find more behaviors for which to praise students.

(b) Reprimands should not be over used. A rule of thumb is that one reprimand every 4 or 5 minutes should be the maximum to be used. Of course, even this rate would mean that an effective teacher should average four praise statements during that time. It is important to remember that a teacher who uses reprimands more than praise soon loses control of the class.

Cautions

Teacher praise alone (or paired with mild reprimands) may not be effective for some students who do not care what the teacher likes or appreciates. In these cases, the teacher may need to initially pair the praise with some more tangible reinforcement or with a token economy so that the praise will take on reinforcing qualities by association with something the student does find reinforcing. Students may become praise-dependent, meaning that they only produce work or appropriate behavior as long as the teacher is in the immediate vicinity or that the teacher is recognizing their effort. To avoid this problem the teacher should not stay at one student's desk too long or too often, but should circulate within the classroom.

Praise should never be faded out completely, but an attempt should be made to gradually fade it to levels that are considered normal within a classroom setting. Older students may find verbal praise from the teacher undesirable, even when a teacher uses praise throughout the class with a variety of students for a variety of reasons. For some students, public praise is more embarrassing than it is rewarding. For these students, it is suggested that praise be given on a one-to-one basis in an unobtrusive manner. The teacher may do this by standing by the classroom door as the student enters or exits or even by a short note written on student papers.

Troubleshooting

Problem: Student progress on the target behaviors has not been adequate.

Solution: Praise alone may not be sufficiently reinforcing to the student. The teacher may need to initially pair it with the use of a token economy or tangible reinforcement to be effective. In this case, once the target behavior has stabilized at appropriate levels, the additional SR+ should be gradually faded, leaving just the praise alone.

Problem: Student behavior is actually getting worse.

Solution: The teacher should monitor him/herself (or ask an aide to take data) on whether more attention/ verbal remarks are directed toward the student's inappropriate behaviors. The teacher may inadvertently have been systematically increasing inappropriate behavior in this manner. If this is the case, the teacher can correct the problem by increasing praise so that the desired 4:1 praise to mild reprimand rates exists.

Case Example: The Use of Praise With a Student

Rose is an eight year old third grade student who has a history of incomplete assignments and poor study habits. Baseline observations during the math or spelling periods produced a mean rate of about 30 percent time-on-task, fluctuating from 0 to 71 percent. Her off-task behaviors included laying her head on the desk, taking off her shoes, talking, and being out of her seat.

On the day the teacher was to first praise Rose's time-on-task behavior, Rose did not study at all, and the teacher was thus unable to provide any praise for the behavior. Therefore, beginning with the second praise session, the teacher praised the behavior that approximated time-on-task. That is, getting out pencils, paper, or opening the book to the correct page. Once these behaviors were praised, time-on-task quickly followed. By the third praise session, time-on-task had risen to 57 percent. During the fourth session, however, time-on-task dropped to 25 percent. An analysis of the data indicated Rose had increased out-of-seat behavior in order to have her papers checked and to ask questions. Thereafter, her teacher ignored Rose when she approached but praised her immediately when she raised her hand while seated. There was an immediate drop in out-of-seat behavior and a concurrent increase in time-on-task. During the last ten praise sessions, time-on-task behavior ranged between 74 and 92 percent, with the mean rate of 81 percent for the entire period. A high rate of time-on-task was maintained after the thirteenth praise session.

During the fourth (reversal) session, time-on-task was recorded only about 29 percent of the time. However, a return to attention for time-on-task immediately increased the behavior to 72 percent of the observed interval, with the level of time-on-task maintaining after the second praise phase.

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Using Group Contingencies to Improve Academic Achievement

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Using Group Contingencies to Improve Academic Achievement

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will know:

- ✔ The three basic types of group contingencies.
- ✔ How to implement a group contingency procedure.
- ✔ Ways to enhance a group contingency procedure.
- ✔ How to solve specific problems that may arise when using overcorrection procedures.

Introduction

A group contingency is a system for the delivery of a contingency to an entire group based upon the behavior of the individuals in that group. There are three basic types of group contingencies:

1. Individual-All Group Contingency: With this type of group contingency, the consequence for the entire group is based on the performance of one individual. There are several variations to this type of group contingency.

Variation 1: The student is selected and announced to the group at the beginning of the day. The advantage of this variation is that the identified student is motivated to do well because his/her name has been made public. The disadvantage is that, if the student fails, he/she may receive negative peer feedback. Although negative feedback is rare, a teacher should take these precautions: (a) make sure the student is capable of meeting the criterion; (b) if student negative feedback occurs, the teacher should be prepared to consequate that behavior with a pre-planned consequence (e.g., loss of recess or a prized privilege for the student giving the negative feedback); and, (c) talk with the students before the group contingency is implemented and indicate that negative feedback will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences for the student or the group if negative feedback occurs. However, indicate that genuine encouragement and support for the student is much preferable.

Variation 2: With this variation, a student is randomly selected to determine if he/she meets the group contingency criterion. Once a student is selected, then it is determined if he/she met the criterion and, hence, if the group is to be rewarded. The major advantage with this variation is that each student in the group has an equal probability of being selected so all students are motivated. Each student is unsure if they will be selected. It helps to put the selected name in a sealed envelope at the front of the class. At the end of the day, the envelope is opened and the name read. The disadvantage of this approach is that the unmotivated student most in need of the benefits of the group contingency has a small chance of being selected (unless the teacher periodically rigs the selection).

2. Independent Group-Contingency: In this second type of group contingency, each member of the group must individually earn a reward based on individual performance. The same performance is required for each group member, and the consequences are the same for each. For example, extra recess time is given to each student who correctly finishes 80% of their arithmetic assignment. If students fall below 80%, they do not receive the extra recess. The advantage of this approach is that one rule applies with one consequence for all students. It is easy to implement. However, the disadvantage is that this is not a true group inter-dependency. Each student independently works to meet his/her criterion so they can gain access to the group reward. Students are not dependent on each other's performance for the consequence. Thus, cooperation is reduced and the overall effectiveness is less than a true interdependent group contingency.

3. Group-All Group Contingency: This is a true interdependent group contingency in which the group consequence is dependent on the performance of the group as a whole. For example, all students in a classroom must behave with no checks on the board before the group gets an extra snack time. There are two basic variations of this group contingency:

Variation 1: In this variation, each member of the group must meet a criterion before the class is rewarded. The advantage to this approach is that it fosters cooperation and encouragement between students. However, there are two basic disadvantages. First, this is an ambitious standard for many students. It may be very difficult for all students to meet the criterion. A teacher should start with a lower standard and slowly move the standard up as students improve. For example, a teacher may allow three names on the board for inappropriate behavior the first week (if it reaches four names, the group would not be rewarded); then the second week move to two names; and, finally, the third week, one name. The second disadvantage is that it may be difficult for a teacher to keep track of a total group standard. For instance, if the standard is that all students must complete 80% of their arithmetic assignment, then the teacher must grade all of the students' papers. If this is the case, then Variation # 2 may be more appropriate.

Variation 2: With this variation, students are randomly selected and their performance is averaged. If the average exceeds the criterion, the whole group is rewarded. If the average is below, then the group loses the reward. For

example, if 80% completion of all arithmetic problems is the criterion, then the teacher would randomly select three students from the class. He would grade their papers immediately and decide if the 80% criterion had been met. The major advantage of this approach is the ease of calculating the criterion. Also, this approach encourages students to exceed the criterion because one or two superior performances may help average out a failing performance. Again, the major disadvantage is the severity of the criterion. Some students may be capable and others incapable of meeting the standard. Teachers should start with a lower standard and slowly increase the standard so all students are capable of reaching it.

Are Group Contingencies Effective?

Group contingencies and their effects on school performance have been carefully examined for over 20 years. There are several studies that show that group contingencies are effective in reducing several types of difficult school behaviors including: classroom misbehavior (Barrish, Saunders, & Wolf, 1969), bus riding behavior (Greene, Bailey, & Barber, 1981), swearing (Salend & Meddaugh, 1985), property destruction at home (Schakel, 1983), aggression (Brown, Reschly, & Saber, 1974), disruptive library behavior (Fishbein & Wasik, 1981) and many others. They have also been used to improve academic behavior such as spelling (Baer & Richards, 1980) and arithmetic (Speltz, Shimamura, & McReynolds, 1982).

Classroom Behavior

A good example of using a group contingency to improve classroom behavior was presented by Cowen, Jones, and Bellack (1979) using a group contingency with Grandma's Rule. This study was conducted with five regular elementary classrooms (approximately 25 students in each) with children ranging in age from first graders through the third grade. All of the classrooms were in the Rochester City School District and were selected on the basis of reported high rates of disruptive behavior. A simple contingency was set in which a low probability behavior (i.e., academics) must first be exhibited before a high probability behavior (i.e., play time) could be obtained. In this study, students were allowed to vote on a preferred classroom activities from a "reinforcement menu" just before the academic period (a reading circle or in-seat work). The reinforcers selected usually included such items as alphabet bingo, eraser tag, playing musical chairs, and so on. However, before the students could participate in these activities, they needed to accumulate 15 minutes of good work.

Three high rate disruptive behaviors were selected to be decreased with the group contingency. These behaviors included: (1) out of seat, (2) talking with neighbors, and (3) off-task. Students in each classroom were told that when they had earned 15 minutes of accumulated good work during the 30 minute academic time, then they could have the remainder of the 30 minutes for the preferred activity. The teacher held a stop watch that kept running as long as students were working appropriately. However, if a student engaged in any of the misbehaviors listed above, the teacher stopped the watch.

In theory, if all the students were perfect, they could earn 15 minutes of preferred activity time out of the 30 minute academic period. However, for each student that engaged in an inappropriate behavior, that time was subtracted for the whole group until that student returned to work (i.e., the watch was not started until the student worked). The teacher used a three-step sequence when a student misbehaved or went off-task:

Step 1: Stated the misbehaving student's name so the whole class could hear it.

Step 2: Told the student(s) what to do (e.g., "Stop talking and get back to work.").

Step 3: Held the stop watch up, and indicated the watch was not running with such statements as "The watch is stopped." or "You're killing time."

This procedure was very effective with all of the targeted misbehaviors.

Academic Behavior

A study by Speltz, Shimamura, and McReynolds (1982) describes individual contingency versus three different types of group contingencies that can be applied to improve academic motivation in students. In this study, twelve learning disabled students ranging in age from 7 to 10 were included. All students had difficulty with arithmetic. The assigned problems were within their capability level. The goal was to increase practice times working problems to improve proficiency. For the student, each problem resulted in one point. The points could then be exchanged for valued rewards.

Group Contingency-All Members: With this group contingency, the average number of points from each student was used to determine the number of points for the whole group. For example, the number of points earned by each student was then averaged with the group as a whole. This average was then given to each member of the group as their points.

Group Contingency-Identified Responder: A member of the group was selected, and the number of points earned by that student was then given to each member of the group.

Group Contingency-Unidentified Responder: All the names of the students in the group were put into a cup. At the end of the academic period, a name was selected (but not identified) and the number of points earned by unidentified selected student was then given to each member of the group.

Each of the procedures were effective with an average performance increase of 66%. Only one student in the group of 12 did not show discernable improvements. It is important to note that the side effects of using the group contingencies were very positive. Negative comments and behaviors were very low. In the Identified Responder group contingency where peer social pressure might be expected to be high, "not a single instance of negative behavior was directed at these children" (p. 543). In fact, spontaneous peer helping behavior was reported in which peers helped each other structure the task. This is similar to other studies, in which the majority of students and teachers express satisfaction and a preference for a well

designed group contingency once they have been implemented.

Steps for Implementing A Group Contingency

A group contingency may be needed if the teacher thinks there is inappropriate peer influence, a need exists for teaching responsibility and cooperation, or the class size is large with limited resources. If so, there are several steps to implementing an effective group contingency. These steps are outlined below:

Step 1: A decision about the type of group contingency to be used is the first step in implementing the procedure. For most educational situations, a group-all group cotingency pr›bably is most useful to improve academic motivation for an entire classroom. The random checking variation is practical. For targeting a chronically unmotivated student, an individual-group contingency is best. If this contingency is used, the teacher should be sensitive to negative student feedback and make sure the student is capable of doing the assigned academic work.

If a student is just learning a new academic skill and has not yet mastered it, a group contingency can make things worse. In this situation, the student should be reinforced for effort.

Step 2: After the type of group contingency has been selected, it becomes important to specify the target behavior. If an academic behavior is selected, it should be one that is easily graded and quantified (e.g., 80% or better). It is also better to start with a lower standard and slowly increase the criterion until the student is successful. Again, it is important to make sure that the student is capable of completing the task at the desired criterion.

The targeted problem should be a motivation problem. If a student is just learning a new academic skill and has not yet mastered it, a group contingency can make things worse. In this situation, the student should be reinforced for effort.

If classroom behaviors are selected for the target behaviors, they should be clearly observable and measurable. Poorly defined behaviors such as "poor attitude," "disrespect," or "sullen behavior" are to be avoided. More preferred behaviors that can be used with a group contingency are "talk outs," "out of sea," or "not following a teacher's directions."

Step 3: Once a target behavior has been selected, it is important to collect baseline data on the behavior before a group contingency is started. A baseline allows a teacher to set a reasonable criterion. For example, the teacher might record how many times a week a student turns in his homework. If the student turns it in only once, then the teacher might set the criterion at turning homework in three times during the first week and then slowly increase the criterion. Similarly, if a student routinely only completes 40% of the problems on a math sheet each day, the teacher might set the criterion at 60% for the first week and then increase the criterion. For inappropriate behaviors, if a classroom has 20 talk outs as a group in a day, the teacher might set the criterion at 10 the first week.

One mistake often made by teachers is to set the criterion too high. If this is done, it is both frustrating and takes the group too long to receive a reward. It should be possible for the group to earn the reward daily, particularly when a group contingency is first started.

Step 4: Before a group contingency is started, it is important for the teacher to discuss the procedure with the class, school principal, and to inform parents and ask for permission to participate. A parent letter with a permission form explaining the group contingency and asking for permission is important. The letter can detail the target behavior of the group contingency. Also, the letters can be written to emphasize the cooperative-responsibility aspect of the group contingency and the positive aspects of the program (i.e., the extra privileges the group will earn that they would ordinarily not receive).

Variety and unpredictability can be important variables in using a reward system.

Step 5: Select the consequences to be used with the group contingency. All consequences should be primarily positive. That is, the students should receive something extra if they meet the criterion. A poorly designed group contingency emphasizes negative consequences. A good approach in the selection of positive consequences is to have students vote on a selection from a menu. Variety and unpredictability can be important variables in using a reward system. For example, a mystery motivator incorporates both variety and unpredictability. This is simply a reward that is written on a piece of paper and put in a sealed envelope in front of the classroom. The students do not know exactly what they will get until they have reached the criterion. Other rewards can be chosen from a grab bag (a bag with several rewards for the group that one student selects without looking into the bag for the whole group).

If negative consequences are used with a group contingency, it is better to have students work an extra period of time. If severe behavior occurs, then a severe clause can be used. For example, if students do not meet the group contingency criterion, then they work during the time they would have received the reward. However, if a severe misbehavior occurs (e.g., aggression, tantrum, severe noncompliance) that is rewarded by the group, then the group might miss recess or wait in their seat for 30 seconds after the bell rings.

Step 6: A feedback system that informs students how well they are doing on the target behavior is very important. A feedback system allows students to gauge their progress. It facilitates cooperation and competition between teams (to be discussed later). Simple visual feedback systems such as marks on the board, marbles in a jar, happy or sad faces on a board are best. Even a tower of blocks that are colored in can be used. With the tower, a teacher colors in a block each time a student hands in an assignment or does the required number of problems. After a set number of blocks are completed, students are rewarded.

As part of the feedback system, it also helps to post the rules or the expected criterion in the classroom.

Troubleshooting

There are a number of things that can go wrong with a group contingency. However, if a group contingency is well-planned, then the difficulties associated with a group contingency are greatly reduced.

Problem—Student Sabotage: In some instances, one or two students may decide to sabotage the group contingency for the entire classroom. Although many teachers worry about this problem, it is relatively rare. The first thing to check if student sabotage occurs is to make sure the rewards that you have used are really valued and reinforcing. Ask some of the students, and then talk with the offending student(s). If the problem continues, make the sabotaging student(s) a team all by themselves. In other words, have them work for their own contingency while the cooperating group continues to work for their's.

Problem—Student Failure: If one student frequently fails to meet the contingency for the group but seems genuinely interested in cooperating, then the teacher should examine the criterion. It is foolish to set the criterion at 80% correct if one or two students are capable of only 60% accuracy at their current ability level. In this situation, the teacher should either: (1) re-set the criterion for the whole group at a lower level, or (2) keep the criterion at 80% for the group but set the level lower for the less capable students and slowly raise it as the students acquire the needed skills. The second option is the preferred option, particularly if the teacher does not highlight the fact the he has set a lower criterion for one or two students.

Problem—Program Failure After an Initial Success: When this happens it generally means two things: either the consequences are not potent or peer influence has increased. The teacher should check the reward and punishment components of the program. If intensified peer influence is suspected, the teacher may need to single out the most influential peers and (1) make them a confederate to help the program be a success, or (2) make them a special team and increase the privilege loss to this group, or (3) call their parents into the classroom for a discussion. Often times consequences can be arranged at home for students.

Problem—The Program Has Never Really Worked: If this problem occurs, the teacher should again check the consequences of the program. If the consequences are appropriate, then the teacher should check the consistency of the program. The target behaviors should be checked to see if they are specifically defined. The criterion should also be checked to determine if it is unrealistically high or if one or two students are not capable of making it. The consistency of application by aides, volunteers, and assistants should be checked. It helps to have them help design the program and to take a test over the rules to make sure each person understands the program.

Problem—Unfairness Argument: This occurs sometimes when parents and principals have not been adequately informed. Inform them and obtain their permission. If parents continue to be concerned, invite them to discuss the issues and possibly modify the program.

If complaints only come from the students, tell them that they share responsibility with their

peers and they need to help them. Also indicate that no threats or aggression will be tolerated. If students continue to complain, ignore the complainer and openly praise other cooperating students. When the complaining student demonstrates the desired behavior, specifically verbally reinforce him/her.

Ways to Enhance a Group Contingency

There are several ways to enhance the use of a group contingency. Some of these methods involve changing reinforcers, teams, the use of machines, and the use of specifically defined roles in the groups for students.

> ***One of the most effective methods to improve a group contingency is to divide a classroom into teams.***

Teams

One of the most effective methods to improve a group contingency is to divide a classroom into teams. When used in classrooms, this procedure has been called the "Good Behavior Game" (Barrish, Saunders, & Wolf, 1969). Each team competes against itself and the other team. The group contingency should be designed so that: (1) both teams can win, (2) both teams can lose, and (3) one team can win and one team can lose. The best type of procedure to use is a group-all group contingency with random selection of three unidentified students whose performance will be averaged to determine if the criterion is met for that team. The steps are:

Step 1: Divide a classroom into two separate teams—the composition to be decided by teacher (each team should contain a mixture of poor, average, and above average students). Teams stay the same for each week, and they are re-selected to form new teams the following week.

Step 2: Select the daily criterion (academic, behavior, or both). Post the criterion.

Step 3: Have students vote on a variety of rewards at the beginning of the week. Have one of these rewards available each day. It helps not to disclose the reward—use a grab bag or mystery motivator system.

Step 4: At the end of the day, select at least two students' work from each team. Do not disclose their names, but average their performance to see if the criterion is matched or exceeded. If a behavior (e.g., talk outs or out of seats) is being used with the group contingency, collect data on the students for each team. A clipboard is useful for making marks for each behavior.

> ***Reinforcement is at the core of an effective group contingency system.***

Step 5: If the team matches or exceeds the criterion, they are rewarded. If not, that team works on academics during the reward period.

Step 6: Post in big letters how many times each team has met the criterion for each day of the week (this is a public posting procedure).

Variety In Reinforcement Procedures

Reinforcement is at the core of an effective group contingency system. Several ideas for reinforcement have already been presented in this module. In too many instances, group contingencies can be negatively focused. Although some punishment procedures may be necessary under some conditions, the positive aspects of a group contingency should be highlighted. Variety and anticipation of a reward for the group are excellent methods. The steps to enhance reinforcers are:

Step 1: Let students self-select reinforcers from a menu and vote on them. A reinforcement checklist can also be used with students rating the reinforcers. The voting can then be used as a method to determine which reinforcers are the most potent (most votes) to the least potent (least votes). Use at least ten reinforcers that do not take too much time or cost too much money.

Step 2: If possible, display some of the reinforcers for the students. Let them see some of the items, pictures of activities, possible videos.

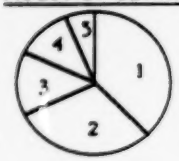
Step 3: Design a delivery system that maximizes variety and anticipation. Grab bags and mystery motivators have already been mentioned. Spinners and classroom bingo are also excellent systems.

Spinners

The spinner system is simply a circle with unequal pie shaped wedges and an arrow that can spin. Each numbered wedge represents a reinforcer. After the criterion is met, a selected student spins the arrow and whatever wedge it lands on is the reinforcer for the group. The narrow wedges of the spinner should represent more expensive (time, effort, money) or valued reinforcers while the larger wedges represent less expensive reinforcers.[1]

Reinforcers	Group
1 = Treats	1 = Treats
2 = Pencils	2 = Pencils
3 = Stickers	3 = Stickers
4 = Class game	4 = Grab bag
5 = Free time	5 = Free time

Model of Spinner



Classroom Bingo

This group contingency system requires a matrix of numbered squares (3 x 3--RED; 4 x 4--BLUE, 5 x 5—GREEN) that can be laminated on poster board and placed in the front of the classroom.

R	E	D
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

B	L	U	E
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16

G	R	E	E	N
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25

A teacher selects a reinforcer for the day and places it in front of the class near the matrix. Each time the group meets the criterion a student is allowed to pull a number out of a bag. The number is marked on the matrix with a water based marker. For the RED card, when the numbers selected form any row, column, or diagonal, the teacher gives the group the reinforcers in the envelope. When the students as a group become proficient at reaching the criterion, the teacher can move to the BLUE card which requires 4 matches, and finally the GREEN card which requires 5 matches. This system is an excellent way to use a group contingency where the teacher wants a

criterion met several times a day or there may be several different criteria (e.g., 80% of homework completed and returned in the morning, no problems at recess, 80% of in-seat worked completed that day, no more than 1 name on the board for classroom rule violations). It is also useful for slowly expanding the criterion requirement so that rewards can be given to the group less often for more work-first blue, then green, and then red.

Machines

The use of some types of machines and instruments can enhance the effectiveness of a group contingency. A stop watch has already been discussed earlier in this module. Similarly, a large classroom clock can be hooked up to a garge door opener. When the students are working, then the clock is running accumulating free time for the students. However, when a student stops working or becomes disruptive, the teacher clicks the garge door opener and stops the clock until the student returns to work. The accumulated time on the big clock is the amount of free time for the group.

Another example of using a machine was by a high school math teacher who brought a disc player to school that could be controlled by a remote controller. Students were invited to bring their favorite disks to class to be played softly while student did independent seat work. If a student went off task and stopped working, the teacher paused the playing disk for five minutes.

Student Administered Group Contingencies

This approach is one of the most promising for using a group contingency with students to improve academic skills. The procedure was developed by Wolfe, Fantuzzo, and Wolter (1984). The group contingency is based on teams made up of four members: a Coach, Scorekeeper, Referee, and Manager. The Coach performs a self-instructional function for the group. He/she determines the daily academic goal and reminds the other team members of predetermined strategies for increasing their performance. The Scorekeeper counts the number of correct academic responses made by the other team members and a total team score. The Referee rechecks the Scorekeeper's work and acts like a built in reliability check. The Manager compares the daily score of the team to their self-determined goal and checks to see if the team has met the group contingency criterion for reinforcement. If they have, he/she declares they have won and arranges for the teacher to reinforce the group. The teacher sets a goal for the team to meet to get reinforced. It may take the team several days to be rewarded dependent on how high they set their goal and how hard they work.

The applied research on this type of approach with basic academic skills such as arithmetic performance has shown excellent results. It is particularly successful with unmotivated students who seem not to work for other incentives. Self-administered group contingencies could be enhanced by using some of the reward suggestions listed above.

Using Overcorrection to Improve Academic Performance

Utah's BEST Project

Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers

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Using Overcorrection to Improve Academic Performance

Objectives

By the end of the module, you will know

- ✔ The definition of positive practice overcorrection and restitutional overcorrection.
- ✔ Specific applications of overcorrection procedures to spelling, oral reading, math, and better/word reversal performance problems.
- ✔ How to implement overcorrection procedures for academic problems.
- ✔ How to solve specific problems that may arise when using overcorrection procedures.
- ✔ Cautions when using overcorrection procedures.

Overcorrection is an educational technique that teachers have used for ages. Overcorrection means repeating a behavior over and over, the correct way, until it is over corrected. Teachers use this technique in several ways. For example, if a student teases another student, the teacher might have the student write, "I am sorry, I will not tease in the future", a hundred times on the blackboard. Similarly, if students are running down the halls, a teacher might have them walk down the hall 10 times. In both of these examples, a misbehavior is consequated by practicing the correct behaviors. In the teasing example, the student repeatedly practices writing an apology and a promise. In the running example, the students repeatedly practice walking down the halls correctly.

There is a great deal of research supporting the effectiveness of overcorrection. For instance, overcorrection procedures have been used to improve not paying attention, aggression, sharing behavior, toileting accidents, vandalism, swearing, and many other inappropriate or pesky behaviors. The authors have used it for their own children for failing to pick up dishes (pick them up 10 times), leaving doors open (shut door 10 times), or dropping clothes or toys on the floor (pick them up 10 times). This type of overcorrection is called positive practice because the child has to practice the correct behavior numerous times.

Positive practice overcorrection can also be used with academic problems because of its drill and practice features. Many students are unmotivated because they have not mastered an essential skill that is needed before the next academic skill can be taught. As skill deficits increase, the student becomes more and more

unmotivated. The drill and practice component of positive practice overcorrection helps a student acquire and master the skill. It is particularly useful for spelling, mathematics facts, reading, and writing skills that require practice for mastery.

A second type of overcorrection is called restitutional overcorrection. This type of overcorrection has less application to academic skills than it has for classroom misbehavior. With restitutional overcorrection, a student is required to make the environment better than it was before the misbehavior occurred. For example, if a student spits on another student's desk, the spitter would be required to clean the tops of all the desks in the room. Similarly, if a student threatens another student, that student would be required to apologize to all the students in the classroom. In some instances, restitutional overcorrection may require manual guidance of the student until the student starts the appropriate behavior. Restitutional overcorrection has limited application for increasing academic motivation.

Is Overcorrection Effective?

Spelling

Three studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of positive practice overcorrection for spelling (Foxx & Jones, 1978; Ollendick, Matson, Esveldt-Dawson, & Shapiro, 1980; Stewart & Singh, 1986). The participants were students who were classified mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed. Two basic strategies have been used in these studies:

Method 1:

1. Teacher pronounces the word.
2. Student pronounces the word.
3. Student pronounces the letters as the word is spelled by teacher.
4. Correct spelling is praised by teacher.
5. For misspelled words, student is required to write the word five times saying each letter aloud. (Saying the letters is an important part of this procedure.)

Method 2:

Student is given a spelling pretest. For each misspelled word . . .

1. Using a dictionary or spelling book, the student is required to write the word correctly.
2. Also writes the word's correct phonetic spelling.
3. Writes as part of speech.
4. Writes the word's complete dictionary definition.
5. Uses the word correctly in five sentences other than the sentences in the dictionary or spelling book.

Both of these approaches were very effective in improving spelling skills. Consumer satisfaction ratings from the students indicated that most students liked the procedures. The important components include writing the misspelled words at least five times and saying the letters a-loud as the word is spelled. The main disadvantage to Method 1 is the teacher's one-on-one instructional time. This procedure could be modified for independent work. The disadvantages for Method 2 are the requirements for the student to write complete sentences and use a dictionary.

Oral Reading Skills

Two studies have examined the effects of positive practice overcorrection procedures with oral reading skills (Singh & Singh, 1986; Singh, Singh, & Winton, 1984). Again, two basic methods have been used:

Method 1: The Drill Approach

The teacher's instructions for the use of drill procedure are:

> Here is a story. I want you to read it. I will help you if you make any mistakes. I will tell you the correct word and then you can go on reading. After you have completed your reading, I will print on cards all the words you did not read correctly and we will go over them until you can read them correctly. Try your best not to make any mistakes."

1. The student reads a selected passage.
2. Errors are noted by the teacher and the correct word is given.
3. At the end of the passage, the teacher makes flash cards for all the incorrectly read words.
4. The student is drilled on the flash cards with corrective feedback until achieving 100% accuracy.

Method 2: Positive Practice-Repeat Method

1. Student reads a short passage.
2. When the student makes an oral reading mistake, the correct word is pronounced by the teacher while the student looks and points at the word in the passage.
3. Then the student points to the word and says it five times.
4. The student then reads the complete sentence again that contained the word.

Here are the teacher instructions for the positive practice-repeat procedure:

> "Here is a story. I want you to read it. I will help you if you make mistakes. I will tell you the correct word while you listen and point to the word in the book. After that, I want you to point to and say the word five times. Then you will read the sentence again. Try your best not to make any mistakes, but if you do make one and correct yourself, I will give you lots of praise for doing so."

The drill procedure is about twice as effective in reducing oral reading errors as doing nothing (e.g., letting the student read with corrective feedback from the teacher, but not requiring the student to correct the error). However, the positive practice-repeat procedure is twice as effective as the drill procedure in reducing oral errors. It is important when using these procedures to consider pauses (10 to 15 seconds) and omissions as errors. Reinforcing the student verbally or with edibles for self-corrections (i.e., no teacher assistance in correcting the error) increased self-corrections and reduced overall errors.

A disadvantage of both methods is that they require one-to-one teacher instructional time. Method 1 (Drill) also has the disadvantage of requiring a teacher to make flash cards immediately after a passage is read. A disadvantage of Method 2 (Repeat) is that repeating a word five times disturbs the basic flow of reading the passage. However, parent tutoring or peer tutoring might reduce the overall one-to-one instruction of time required.

Math Practice

Overcorrection procedures work best on math facts that require memorization. Simple addition, subtraction, and multiplication facts can be learned with overcorrection procedures. An effective overcorrection procedures is the Cover, Copy, and Compare procedure (Skinner, Turco, Beaty, & Rasavage, 1989).

Overcorrection procedures work best on math facts that require memorization. Simple addition, subtraction, and multiplication facts can be learned with overcorrection procedures.

Cover, Copy, & Compare Method

1. A list of math facts is developed (see three separate lists below for multiplication).
2. The student looks at the first problem and its solution (e.g., 2 X 3 = 6).
3. Cover the problem with an index card.
4. Write the problem with its solution on the right side of the page.
5. Uncover the problem on the right side of the page and compare the problem and solution.
6. If an error is made, the student repeats the process with the same problem.
7. If the problem is correct, the student moves on to the next problem.
8. The student completes three separate sheets of problems (lists that have the same problems but in a different order) at each session. This ensures the student has correct practice with each problem at least three times.

Examples of Math Problems

List A	List B	List C
2 x 6 = 12	2 x 9 = 18	2 x 5 = 10
2 x 7 = 14	3 x 6 = 18	3 x 4 = 12
3 x 5 = 15	3 x 7 = 21	3 x 9 = 27
3 x 8 = 24	4 x 4 = 16	4 x 7 = 28
4 x 6 = 24	4 x 5 = 20	5 x 5 = 25
4 x 9 = 36	4 x 8 = 32	5 x 7 = 35
5 x 6 = 30	5 x 8 = 40	6 x 6 = 36
5 x 9 = 45	6 x 7 = 42	6 x 8 = 48
7 x 7 = 49	7 x 9 = 63	6 x 9 = 54
8 x 9 = 72	9 x 9 = 81	7 x 8 = 56

An advantage of a Cover, Copy, and Compare overcorrection procedure is that is can be done independently by the student with periodic checking by the teacher. It also gives the student frequent practice with each math problem. The basic disadvantage of the system is that it can be boring and, thus, needs some type of reinforcement system for completing the problems.

Letter Reversals

Much has been written about the significance of reversing alphabetic letters such as b and d. Reversals are common before age 7. Most reversals can be reviewed as a discrimination problem. Similar letters such as a b and d are confused because they look alike. Similar words may also be confused such as saw and was. The best way to learn not to make reversal errors is practice. Overcorrection is an excellent practice method.

Method 1: The method is Cover, Copy, and Compare and is essentially the same as for math facts with these exceptions:

1. The student should say the letter from a list.
2. The student should trace the letter as it is said.
3. The letter should be covered with an index card.
4. The letter should be copied three to five times to the right of the covered letter. Each time the letter is copied it should be compared to the covered letter on the list and said aloud.
5. Errors should be immediately corrected by a teacher (or aide, or peer tutor) and the student required to write the correct letter.
6. Lists of random letters (or words) should be developed (i.e., d, b, p, q, r, t, d, g, p, l, t or was, saw, as, cat, tac, saw, the, was).

Overcorrection works best where practice is needed to master a skill such as writing letters, letter reversal correction, spelling, sight words, oral reading, or math facts.

Steps for Implementing an Overcorrection Procedure

Step 1: Decide what academic skill the student needs. Overcorrection works best where practice is needed to master a skill such as writing letters, letter reversal correction, spelling, sight words, oral reading, or math facts.

Step 2: Design a worksheet that a student can use to practice the academic operation. It helps if the work sheet is lined and numbered. Numbering helps a student keep track of the number of repetitions needed.

Step 3: Set up a time each day when he/she independently practices the skill at his or her desk. Independent practice is practical with spelling, mathematics, and writing. It is more difficult with reading skills.

Step 4: It is easy to forget about a student when they are engaged in independent overcorrection practice. It is critical that teachers circulate around the classroom and verbally praise students who are on task and working. Younger students respond to overt verbal praise and a touch. Older students are less responsive to verbal praise and may respond better to quiet praise and a touch on the shoulder.

Step 5: A parallel reinforcement system is always needed when working with overcorrection for unmotivated students. Reinforcement systems that are random and pay-off frequently at the start are best. Several suggestions for reinforcement systems are:

1. Random, on-task "beep tape" or timer with points for reinforcement for attending and working.
2. Mystery motivators, spinners, and grab bags can be used with individual students.
3. Mystery motivators, grab bags, or spinners can also be used with an entire group.

4. Contracts can be used with the number of overcorrection worksheets used to meet a cumulative criterion. Contracts should not be the only reinforcement system used with overcorrection. Contracts work best as an adjunct to the basic point system.

5. Magic pens are also effective. One pen in the set is filled with invisible ink; the other pens are used to make the invisible ink visible. A box is placed in the upper right hand corner of each worksheet. Some of the boxes have an invisible star in them. When students finish a worksheet, they color the box to see if the star appears. If there is a star, the student receives a mystery motivator. When the student starts the overcorrection practice, the first three sheets have stars, then approximately every other sheet, and, finally, every third sheet or so has a star.

Step 6: It helps if a student's progress is plotted and publicly posted in the classroom. Public posting can be used in conjunction with a behavioral contract.

Trouble Shooting Overcorrection

Problem: The student refuses to do the procedure. This is because it is boring to repeat a task that you perform poorly. It is the most common problem.

Solution: Re-think the motivation system you are using. Try using a Mystery Motivator, change the types of rewards you use, use a public posting system for progress, or combine with a homenote system. Be sure to verbally praise the student even for small increases in performance.

Problem: The student has difficulty getting started or takes too long to complete the overcorrection practice.

Solution: Use a "beat the buzzer" approach. Make a bonus reward dependent on the student finishing before a timer goes off. Make sure that you give the student enough time to finish but not so much time that it can be wasted with off-task behaviors

Problem: The student is not making adequate progress even though the overcorrection practice is completed.

Solution: Check to make sure that the student is not making errors and then practicing them in the overcorrection procedure. This can be disastrous. The only way to prevent errors is to monitor the student closely. If monitoring reveals that errors are still occurring, then the student may need more practice. Include one more overcorrection session with a bonus reward.

Problem: The student is off-task or seems to be daydreaming when he should be doing the overcorrection procedure.

Solution: There are two approaches to improving on-task behavior. First, try a random "beep tape" with points for on-task behavior. Second, check the pacing of the presentation of the material. If the practice items to be given to the student require a presentation by a teacher, then increasing the pace of presentation may increase performance.

Problem: The student tantrums or becomes frustrated with the overcorrection procedure.

Solution: Check your motivation program. Has the

student received a reward recently? If not, rig the system for an immediate payoff. Second, the number of items required to practice may be too many or take too much time. Break the task in to two sessions. Or, give the student a break. Or, contract for completion of the task without a tantrum. Be careful not to reduce the task too much because tantrums can be a manipulation to avoid work. It is better to break the session in half than to reduce the number of response opportunities. There is no substitute for practice.

There is no substitute for practice.

Cautions

Caution is needed when using overcorrection as an academic enhancement technique. Technically, overcorrection is defined as a punishment technique. Punishment techniques are used to suppress or reduce a behavior. It is one of the only punishment techniques in which the student learns something useful while engaging in the behavior. If used alone, positive practice overcorrection would be a punishing experience for the student who would eventually not want toparticipate. To obtain the benefits of overcorrection with academic subjects, the technique must be paired with some type of unique motivating reward or contract. The positive consequence is the key to motivating students to engage in the overcorrection technique.

Case Study

Tim is a first grade student who has had a great deal of difficulty learning to print his letters. Some professionals have suggested that he needs an extensive evaluation of his writing difficulties. Basically, Tim has a terrible time in reversing the letters *b* and *d*. However, his teacher is convinced that he can learn letter discriminations if he is given enough opportunity. She has set up an extra work program for Tim to practice in which he is reinforced for writing repeated b's and d's.

The teacher dictated on five cassettes the following: "Trial 1—write b" or "Trial 2—write d" for a total of 50 trials. Each cassette had a different or random list of b's and d's (25 each). Tim is at a work station with a tape player, cassette, two 3 x 5 cards (one with a b printed along with a picture of the insect bee and one with a b and a picture of a duck) and a lined work sheet that is numbered one through fifty.

The 3 x 5 cards are placed face down on the desk. He plays the first trial for the cassette and writes the dictated letter. He then turns over one of the 3 x 5 cards and compares his written letter with the sample of the b or d. If he is correct, he goes on to the next trial. If he is wrong, he writes the letter five times correctly with the 3 x 5 card as an example. At the end of the session he is allowed to spin a spinner for a reinforcer.

Tim has made significant progress in reducing the number of reversal errors. Although he has been at a 100 percent correct for several days, the teacher continues to have him practice so the skill is overlearned.

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Data Sheet

	First Answer	Practice Repetitions
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